THE

VICAR OF LANSDOWNE.

A TALE.

LANE, MINERVA-PRESS, LEADENHALL-STREET.

THE

VICAR OF LANSDOWNE;

OR

COUNTRY QUARTERS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY

REGINA MARIA ROCHE.

AUTHOR OF

The Children of the Abbey, Maid of the Hamlet, Clermont, &c

"Ye ſmiling band
"Of youths and virgins, who thro' all the maze
"Of young deſire with rival ſteps purſue
"The charm of beauty, if the pleaſing toil
"Can yield a moment's reſpite, hither turn
"Your *favourable* ear."

AKENSIDE.

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DEDICATION.

THE Author of the following Work gladly embraces the preſent opportunity of returning her moſt grateful acknowledgments to the Public, for the high favour and patronage it has already experienced from them;

for

for which ſhe is convinced ſhe is more indebted to their candour and liberality than to any intrinſic merit it poſſeſſes. She hopes, by having attentively reviſed and corrected it, ſhe may have rendered it more worthy their notice; and with humility and gratitude dedicates it to them.

London, Aug. 13, 1800.

ADDRESS.

I INVOKE not you, ye Tuneful Nine, who ſit enthroned on Mount Parnaſſus; an invocation to the Muſes I reſerve for a more important occaſion, when ſublimity may be eſſential to the dignity of my theme, or wit be required to gild my pages with the brightneſs of its beams.

To you, Oh ye critics! I addreſs my fervent prayer; and I implore you to diſregard

diſregard this humble TALE. The amuſement of a few ſolitary hours cannot be worthy of your high attention. Unſtudied, unornamented as it is, it may, perhaps, beguile ſome tedious interval, if your cenſures do not cruelly cruſh the flattering hope, and ſtifle my poor bantling on its firſt ſtruggles into life. Permit it, I entreat you, to paſs by in unheeded inſignificance, and reſerve your ſagacious animadverſions for thoſe ſtupendous works that, like the Pyramids of Egypt, riſe ſucceſſively above each other, and provoke, by their pretenſions to fame, an enquiry into the nature of their ſtructure, and the baſis of their elevation.

THE

VICAR

OF

LANSDOWNE.

CHAP. I.

THE PARADE.

A DETACHMENT of a regiment of foot was quartered at Lanſdowne, a beautiful village, at a conſiderable diſtance from the metropolis. The Officers belonging to it were convivially aſſembled in "the beſt inn's beſt room;" and their converſation turning upon the ſubject of country quarters,

a general declamation prevailed againſt the intolerable hardſhips they impoſed. One vowed that he had been almoſt deſtroyed at Earlswood, by ſpending an evening with the Exciſeman's wife. Another ſwore that he ſhould never recover from the effects of his viſit to the Parſon's lady; her loquacity was as endleſs as her huſband's homilies, her hoſpitality more fatal than a city feaſt, and her affectation worſe than the barbariſm of an *Eſquimaux belle*.

"Batter me from a fortreſs," cried a third, "but I would ſooner ſuffer a ten weeks ſiege, than ſit two hours with what are called your country miſſes; their confounding clack aſſaſſinates my ears more inſufferably than a cannonading; and I would ſooner fly from their overſtrained civilities than I ſhould from a troop of Otaheiteans, or the clutches of an enraged wild Iriſhman."

"Yet

"Yet rural innocence," obſerved a fourth, "has ever been a favourite ſubject of the poet's pen."

"Rural innocence!" anſwered one of them, "pri'thee, where does it now exiſt? Arcadia, my dear fellow, no longer flouriſhes but in the warm regions of fancy and imagination; and ſhould we ſearch for the reality of that chaſte and lovely ſimplicity which the paſtoral poets have deſcribed, the pleaſing portrait would vaniſh from our view, and convince us that they have only given "to airy nothing a local habitation and a name." Every gale wafts the folly and caprice of the metropolis to its neighbouring ſhades; the infection is ſpread from place to place by the natural vanity of the ſex; and however it may decreaſe by tranſmiſſion, the deſtructive poiſon has, in ſome degree, penetrated the moſt ſequeſtered receſſes of

the iſland. If country miſſes, indeed, would confine themſelves to their proper ſphere, they might be bearable; but when an awkward, overgrown, robuſt hoyden, deſigned by nature for the offices of the dairy, talks of the pleaſures of a town life, accuſes papa of cruelty in confining her to woods unconſcious of her charms, cries, with a ſide-glance at the glaſs, 'what a conſpicuous place is the boxes to diſplay a fine figure!' and, falling into the moſt ridiculous attitudes, practiſes airs of affectation, the meaning of which ſhe is too ignorant to comprehend, and too taſteleſs to render elegant, ſhe appears like an ill-made garment, which only expoſes, in a more prepoſterous manner, every natural defect."

"May I be ſhot," exclaimed a young Enſign, "if I don't conſider ſuch beings like natural curioſities. I once entertained a deſign

a deſign to ſend a group of them, as a preſent, to my uncle, who, you know, is a man of *virtù*; they would have made an admirable addition to petrified muſcles, toads, ſcorpions, and preſerved cameleons."

While this converſation was paſſing in the room, two young Officers, who were lounging out from one of the windows, uttered the exclamation, "charming!" with ſuch a tone of emphaſis that it attracted the attention of the diſputants, and terminated a diſcourſe which would ſoon have proved that a country nymph, pretending to elegance, is one of the greateſt monſters in the arcana of nature; and that *ennui* and caprice, in her mouth, are juſt as intolerable as domeſtic bliſs, or rational joys, from the lips of a modern fine lady.

Directly oppoſite to this window was a little walk, regularly planted with two rows

of elms, which the villagers called the mall, and the Officers the parade. To this walk the young ladies of the village conſtantly reſorted every evening; and employed all the artillery of dreſs and beauty, to beſiege the hearts of their attendant ſwains; and on this parade as proud a pleaſure was felt in diſplaying the humble finery of rural life, as was ever experienced by the rival *belles* and *beaux* of the metropolis, robed in all the ſplendour of a birth-day ball, or midnight maſquerade.

Among the fair group, who now preſſed this verdant walk, were two laſſes, whoſe ſuperior charms plainly evinced that nature ſometimes beſtows her gifts on the inhabitants of woods and waterfalls. The eyes of one of them, every now and then, ſlily glanced toward the window from which the Officers were lounging; attracted, we preſume, by the

the number of cockades, and the *jeu d'eſprit* ſo inſeparable from the military character.

The Officers immediately deſerted the room, and, to uſe a military phraſe, repaired directly to the ſcene of action.

Had we the powers of thoſe renowned geniuſes who have ſo inimitably deſcribed the combats of the ſexes, we might attempt to relate the little ſtratagems, or paint the ſmiling loves and graces, which were exhibited to attract the admiration of theſe military heroes. But ſuffice it to ſay with Villars in the Belle's Stratagem, that they were ſoon convinced they had entered on an enterpriſe almoſt as dangerous as an encounter with Paul Jones, or a midnight march to Omai.

It was drawing towards that romantic hour when the moon, ſilvering the firmament, invites thoſe penſive ſouls who talk of love,

and feel or create imaginary woes, to come forth and vent their ſorrows in cadence with the wild notes of Philomel, when the nymphs, whoſe native charms had extorted the flattering exclamation from the Officers, quitted the parade; but they left it not unattended. The ſprightly levity of one of them had conjured up the very ſpirit of gallantry; and two of the Officers, whoſe ſuperior manners marked their higher origin, preſumed to trace their footſteps. A ſignificant ſqueeze, which one of the ladies was obſerved to give to the arm of her fair companion, accompanied with a certain motion of the head, indicated no diſapprobation of their being the objects of the purſuit; but there was ſomething in the *tout enſemble* of their demeanour, that inſpired reſpect and veneration, and protected them from the rudeneſs of an abrupt addreſs. The Officers

ſilently

ſilently followed their fair fugitives, anxiouſly wiſhing that the appearance of ſome of thoſe ſatyrs, who were the moleſtation of the nymphs of old, would afford them an opportunity of offering their aſſiſtance and protection.

Chance, in a laughing mood, at length indulged their wiſhes; but by the intervention of an animal far more harmleſs than an ancient ſatyr.

A white cow ſuddenly ſtarted forward from her entanglement among the branches of an adjacent copſe; and the fair ones, of courſe, as ſuddenly ſtarted back. One of them, with the prettieſt ſcream imaginable, vowed ſhe was frightened out of her life. Life, however, never more ſkilfully performed its functions than at this moment: it darted in radiance from her eyes, and

mantled her cheeks with the crimſon glow of health, pleaſure, and vivacity.

Gallantry, it is ſaid, never appears in ſo irreſiſtible a form as when clothed *à la militaire*; and our heroes were by no means ignorant of that graceful eaſe, that inſinuating addreſs, that enchanting etiquette, which diſtinguiſh men of elegance from thoſe who have never ſacrificed to the graces.

On hearing the ſcream of invitation, they immediately flew forward to offer their ſervices upon ſo alarming an event; but the cow had marched quietly away, and refuſed to give them the opportunity, an animal of the ſame kind once gave to the Earl of Warwick, of enrolling their courage in the annals of renown.

The opportunity, however, of gratifying their more immediate wiſhes was not to be neglected; they expreſſed a well-feigned concern for the fright this incident had occaſioned,

ſioned, repreſented the dangers to which ladies who walk unprotected are continually expoſed, and concluded by ardently requeſting permiſſion to become their eſcort.

The intimidated fair one, in trembling recovery from the effects of her alarm, with a ſoft but inarticulate voice, thanked them for their politeneſs; but neither wholly indulged, nor quite repreſſed the offer of protection. She half ſmiled, half frowned; but her frowns, like miſts before the ſun, ſoon vaniſhed; and in defiance of the rebuking countenance of her companion, ſhe at length permitted them to walk by her ſide. Whether this permiſſion was ſtrictly conſiſtent with female propriety, we ſhall leave to the prudes to determine. It muſt be confeſſed that ſhe had frequently trod the ſame path at a much later hour, without the ſmalleſt apprehenſion; allowance, however,

ought to be made for the agitation her fright had occaſioned.

Having adopted the means of ſafety, her ideas of danger ſoon vaniſhed; and ſhe giggled, laughed, and rattled away, with all the vivacity which good ſpirits and unexpected pleaſure naturally inſpire; while the impropriety of this levity ſeemed to be ſilently cenſured by the grave deportment of her companion. The converſation, highly pleaſing as it was to the ſpeakers, might not prove quite ſo delectable to our readers; we ſhall therefore forbear to deſcribe it, and only remark, that it conſiſted, as is uſual upon ſuch occaſions, of fine compliments, expreſſions of happineſs, anſwers of courſe, &c. &c. &c.

The party at length arrived within ſight of a neat houſe, when the lively little chatterer, with a ſaucy archneſs which implied a conſciouſneſs

ſciouſneſs of the favour ſhe had conferred, returned her protectors thanks for their civility; and her companion acknowledging her gratitude by a curtſy, they both tripped away, leaving the Officers to obſerve their route in ſilent admiration, until the door of the houſe encloſed them from their view.

Captain Melford, for that was the name of one of theſe heroes. on their return to country quarters, expreſſed his ſentiments of the character of his lively favourite in the higheſt ſtrains of panegyric. "The *naiveté* of that girl," ſaid he, "will do more execution in leſs time, by the open, artleſs, unaffected ſprightlineſs of her manner, than women of three times her beauty. While beauty is contriving to call up a ſmile in its moſt graceful form, ſhe would laugh ſaucily in your face, and give you a cannonading from her eyes more immediately fatal to the heart

heart, than all the ſoft blandiſhments which the faireſt face or fineſt form can artfully put on."

"And yet," ſaid Captain Manning, "I admire her companion more. There is a ſoft and feminine delicacy in her look and manner, that ſeems to ſhrink from obſervation; while the other ſaucy little gipſy appears conſcious of her charms, and endeavours to enthral the hearts of all beholders only for the pleaſure of ſporting with them."

The taſte of theſe gentlemen was diſſimilar, though the warmeſt friendſhip ſubſiſted between them. Their diſpoſitions indeed were contraſted, but their attachment was ſincere and ardent.

There was juſt ſufficient of the athletic in Captain Melford's perſon to take from it all appearance of effeminacy, and ſpeak him fit for the profeſſion he had choſen. Did

we

we dare to contradict the aſſertion of that great author, Goldſmith, who has declared there are no ſuch things as black eyes, but that particular rays of light reflecting on thoſe orbs give them that hue, we ſhould have pronounced his to be of that colour. Giving up our opinion, however, to one far, far indeed, more ſkilled in the phœnomena of nature than ourſelves, we ſhall ſay that his eyes were of the darkeſt hazel. His features could not boaſt of harmonious ſymmetry; but there was an irreſiſtible expreſſion in them that evinced a ſoul fraught with fire and vivacity. His underſtanding was brilliant. A great degree of volatility led him into all the faſhionable diſſipations of the age; and a portion of good and bad qualities were ſo nicely blended in his character, that his enemies could ſcarcely point out his defects, or his friends cenſure

them. He was ambitious, and impetuous; but the exerciſe of theſe paſſions was checked by a great ſhare of levity mixed with exceſſive generoſity. To the moſt ſubtle inſinuation he joined a talent for ſatire, which he never ſcrupled to indulge, except, indeed, on thoſe depreſſed by poverty, or labouring under any natural imperfection. A large portion of vanity gave an eaſy and elegant aſſurance to his manners, and contributed to maintain the air of conſcious ſuperiority it inſpired. His converſation was univerſally thought agreeable; his company continually courted; and by the fair ſex he was eſteemed irreſiſtible. The ſoul of this young man was a luxuriant ſoil, where every goodneſs might have flouriſhed, had not diſſipation, by an inſenſible inroad, ſullied its native purity. A prevailing love of gallantry had taught him all thoſe ſeducing wiles which

have

have made ſo many innocents for ever wretched. Virtue however could not wholly deſert a heart where her faireſt, her moſt favoured child, Philanthropy, unalterably remained.

Captain Manning, with as bewitching an inſinuation as Melford, had not the inclination to render it ſo dangerous. A ſtrict adherence to moral principle influenced all his actions. Poſſeſſed of exquiſite ſenſibility, exalted honour, and tender benevolence, he regarded women as unprotected beings, formed to alleviate ſublunary cares, and depending on man for their ſupport. From the nobleſt ſentiments, therefore, that can adorn the human mind, and not from coldneſs of heart, he deemed ſeduction a crime which no example could authorize, no eloquence palliate, no friendſhip excuſe. The generality of obſervers eſteemed him handſome.

ſome. There was a ſoft luſtre in his eyes which, Yorick would have pronounced, denoted a man who made love by ſentiments. He had, in truth, as Fielding has expreſſed it, as much of the "human angelic" about him as it is poſſible to conceive.

Pleaſed with the adventure they had met with, they toaſted in Champaign, ſparkling as their eyes, their fair unknown, whoſe name, ſituation, and genealogy, Melford ſecretly flattered himſelf he ſhould ſpeedily be able to diſcover.

We have now given a ſpecimen of country quarters. Thoſe who diſapprove of it are beſought to ſeize the favourable criſis of a cloſing chapter, and retreat from farther peruſal; as we ſhall give no parole that the ſucceeding ones will be either more entertaining or more ſtupid.

Some

Some, we hope, will good-naturedly make allowances for an undiſciplined volunteer; nor at once declare us unfit for the ſervice into which we have enliſted; but erecting the ſtandard of candour, let its banners benignly float around our head, and gently diſſipate thoſe fears which as often oppreſs the young author as the inexperienced ſoldier.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

A FAMILY.

WE ſhall not, for the ſake of myſtery, envelop our fair nymphs in obſcurity; but at once relate their name, ſituation, pedigree, and fortune. We ſhall not indeed ranſack our brains, or ſend others to ranſack the Herald's Office for their coat of arms: their family was very plain and very virtuous.

"Virtue ennobles its poſſeſſors, and glows with brighteſt luſtre, when grandeur and illuſtrious birth fade to inſignificance." Let the proud lay this awful truth to their hearts.

The

The period will come when their mighty honours ſhall be raſed to the duſt, and the poor untitled yet virtuous man exalted to dignities glorious as ſeraphic, laſting as eternity.

Mr. Ouſeley, the Vicar of Lanſdowne, was the father of our ladies; and he had one ſon older than them. As a man he was beloved by all the country round; and venerated as the miniſter of a pure and holy religion, which he inſtilled with fervour, zeal, and moderation. His precepts won the heart, while they convinced the underſtanding; and aſſured the thoughtleſs and the gay that, if happineſs was the object of their purſuit, the doctrines he inculcated would lead them directly into the "paths of pleaſantneſs, and ways of peace." His diſpoſition was mild and benevolent, his manners open and accommodating, his friendſhips ardent and ſincere.

ſincere. The parſonage houſe, in which he reſided, was pleaſantly ſituated in the middle of a garden, ſurrounded by a ſmall portion of glebe, and fitted up with all the conveniences that comfort can require. The profits of the vicarage, though ſmall, were his chief ſupport; but the affectionate regard of his pariſhioners relieved him from the uſual neceſſity of watching for their payment: they felt and revered the merits of their paſtor, they knew the narrowneſs of his income, and voluntarily brought in their ſeveral contributions with hearts of cheerfulneſs and hands of liberality. Conſcious that the great art of happineſs conſiſts in confining the extent of deſire to the means of its gratification, he ſeldom or never ſuffered his wiſhes to eſcape beyond the bounds his humble lot preſcribed; and he was frequently heard to ſay, that the ſcience of reſtraint, however

however arduous the taſk may at firſt appear, only requires a ſteady reſolution to render the practice of it eaſy and delightful.

There was a faded languor in his countenance that denoted interrupted peace, and reſigned content; for, incongruous as it may ſeem, it is poſſible to preſerve content after peace is gone; I mean that peace which we eternally loſe on being deprived of dear and valued objects. Our hearts mourn over the loſs of them with bleeding anguiſh; but, reflecting on the uſeleſſneſs of ſorrow, the neceſſity of reſignation, the bleſſings ſtill within our reach, we ſuppreſs our murmurings, and are content.

Death had deprived the Vicar of his wife when time was meliorating the romantic ardour of youth into the more exquiſite tenderneſs of maturity. Attached to her by ties of the tendereſt friendſhip, and the warmeſt

warmeſt love, he felt, in loſing her, a link torn from his chain of happineſs, which nothing earthly could ſupply. For, of all the ſorrows incident to humanity, none is ſo bitter as that which is occaſioned by the fatal ſtroke which ſeparates us for ever from thoſe to whom love had intimately joined our hearts. Memory, from time to time, renews the anguiſh, opens the wound which cold content had cloſed, and, by recalling thoſe joys which are paſt and gone, touches every ſpring of painful ſenſibility.

Many years had paſſed away ſince her death. The afflicting event, however, ſtill remained recent and uneffaced upon his memory. The laſt look ſhe gave him, the laſt word ſhe uttered, when ſhe recommended her lambs, her little lambs, to his care, were ever preſent to his mind, accompanied with the expreſſion of compaſſion,

of

of conjugal affection, of maternal tenderneſs, which overſpread her countenance as her ſpirit fled to heaven, and left her lovely form to moulder to its primeval duſt. From theſe ſorrowful reflections his mind reſigned itſelf to the conſolations of Chriſtianity; and the feelings of conſcious virtue, the bleſſings which ſurrounded his habitation, the faithful fondneſs of his domeſtics, and the dutiful affection of his children, all united in one common ſource of comfort to his heart.

In the domeſtic arrangements of his family, pleaſure was made ſubordinate to regularity; but he encouraged cheerfulneſs, and promoted every innocent amuſement.

His own time was chiefly devoted to ſtudy, except that he, every now and then, ſtole an hour, "when ſilence ſooths the meditative mind," to viſit the grave of his be-

loved wife, and drop a tender tear upon the ſod that covered her remains.

He was not without ambition; but it was a paſſion founded upon the noble baſis of paternal affection. He had conceived very flattering expectations of the future greatneſs of his ſon Francis; and deſigning him for the profeſſion of phyſic, if his inclination ſhould concur in the choice, he had placed him at the Univerſity of Glaſgow for the completion of his ſtudies. The talents of Francis promiſed every thing the fondeſt partiality could wiſh; his underſtanding was capacious, his imagination fertile, his application unwearied. Certain eccentricities in his character, however, had gained him, at College, the appellation of an odd fellow. His father alſo perceived a high degree of haughtineſs and impetuoſity in his temper, which it had been the object of parental

anxiety

anxiety to correct; time, he truſted, would aid his endeavours to meliorate them into that refined pride and ſenſibility, which ſo eminently diſtinguiſh and adorn the human character. The breaſt of Francis glowed with all the romantic ſpirit of generoſity incidental to a young and noble mind; but, as it was yet untempered by the ſound judgment and diſcretion of his father, many ſage people obſerved that it was a gulph, in which a fortune, if he had had one to ſpend, would ſoon be ſwallowed up. Poor Francis, alas! was thoroughly ſenſible of the indigence of his family, and expected no patrimony but that which might ariſe in conſequence of the liberal education his father was giving him. The feelings of poverty, however, are always delicate and acute; and the conſciouſneſs of his ſituation ſerved only to increaſe the natural haughti-

neſs of his mind, and to render him impatient under the ſmalleſt indignity, or diſreſpect.

Roſina, the eldeſt daughter, had nearly attained the age of nineteen. To compare her with the Venus de Medicis would perhaps appear extravagant and romantic. Her ſhape, however, was finely proportioned; and her eyes were certainly irradiated by a ſpark of that fire with which the famed Prometheus animated his ſtatue; for they poſſeſſed the power of warming the coldeſt breaſt, and touching the moſt unimpaſſioned heart. Nature, "with her own ſweet and and cunning hand," had painted her cheeks with a tint as lively, and as delicate, as that which blooms upon the opening roſe. Her features, indeed, were not perfectly regular, but they poſſeſſed a ray of animation which rendered them attractive. A lovely ſmile played conſtantly round her lips; which, beſides

ſides diſcovering the ſweetneſs of her diſpoſition, diſplayed the fineſt ſet of teeth, and two of the moſt beautiful dimples, nature ever formed, or fancy painted. Her mind, lively and impatient, yielded reluctantly to the ſlow progreſs of artificial cultivation; and, with a genius capable of attaining perfection in every fine accompliſhment, ſhe had only acquired a ſuperficial knowledge of them all. The ſubjects of her reading had been various and extenſive; but her acquiſitions wanted the digeſtion of thought; and without meaning to give her the ſmalleſt offence, her head reſembled a repoſitory, where different things are promiſcuouſly huddled together, with an intention ſome time or other to arrange them into order and regularity. This ſpecies of procraſtination is perhaps of all others the moſt fatal. Youth is the ſeaſon when ſtudy and application

ſhould till the mental ſoil, and ripen the ſeeds of knowledge into the harveſt of improvement. The gaiety of her diſpoſition naturally inſpired a fondneſs for dancing; and in this elegant art ſhe roſe ſuperior to moſt of her ſex. Love of admiration was the predominant paſſion of her ſoul; of courſe the tongue of flattery found eaſy acceſs to her ear; and ſhe liſtened to the voice of the charmer with rapturous delight. To enjoy this ſweet deluſion, the more uſeful occupations of learning were neglected; her books were thrown aſide, the work-bag was continually loſt, and the harpſichord for ever out of tune. Her converſation, eſpecially in company, was lively and unreſerved; ſhe chatted and laughed, with captivating affability, to all around her; ſome of her obſervations, indeed, might, from a mouth leſs charming, have appeared inſipid; but

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the poet has well obſerved, that "beauty draws us with a ſingle hair." Conſcious charms gave a ſaucineſs to her air. Too great a love of coquetry made her ſometimes ſport with her conqueſts. No proud Sultana could feel a more rapturous triumph at the increaſe of her ſlaves than Roſina. The wildneſs and volatility of her character, however, conveyed a ſecret charm to all her actions; and a certain ſomething, which, though I now feel, I cannot deſcribe—that ſomething which ſo many have conceived without being able to expreſs, gave a finiſh to her character that was truly irreſiſtible; of what this ſecret charm really conſiſts, I leave, with other myſteries of importance, to ſome more penetrating genius to unfold.

Lydia, a year younger than her ſiſter, was tall, and delicately formed. Her complexion was elegantly pale. A mild ray

beamed from her fine blue eyes with ſuch modeſt ſweetneſs, as if "ſecure of all beholders' hearts, neglecting, ſhe could take them." She was one of thoſe drooping lilies that ſweetly flouriſh in the ſhade of ſolitude. Gentleneſs was her boſom friend, and fair propriety of manners adorned her every action. Timid and baſhful, ſhe dazzled not the curſory eye of caſual obſervation; but her ſoul expanded to the ſympathies of friendſhip. Her ſenſe was improved by ſtudy; her judgment matured by obſervation; her principles were ſteady, juſt, and pious. Suſceptible to every ſoft impreſſion, her heart melted with ſilent ſorrow to the tale of woe; and ſhe bewailed with extreme ſenſibility, the fate of thoſe unfortunate beings, who, betrayed by the frailties of nature, or the treacheries of artful villainy,

lie

He obſcured, forlorn, and friendleſs, under the preſſure of calamity.

Mr. Ouſeley, whoſe mind was formed by nature for refinement, had cultivated a very extenſive and profound knowledge of the fine arts. In poetry, the joys and innocence of rural life were once the favourite ſubjects of his muſe; but after the death of his wife, he changed the lively pipe of paſtoral, for the mournful reed of elegy. Theocritus was diſmiſſed, and the plaintive ſtrains of Tibullus, with Lord Lyttleton's celebrated monody, and Mr. Maſon's two elegies, were the ſubjects of his poetic admiration. In painting, his judgment was univerſally conſulted, and approved. But muſic was his greateſt fame, and higheſt pleaſure. The voice of Roſina poſſeſſed great compaſs, and exquiſite melody. The good old man frequently hung with rapture on the magic ſoft-

neſs of her notes. He was anxious to improve ſo fine a talent to the higheſt pitch of poſſib le perfection; but he had to lament that her giddy inattention to the rules and practice of the art, was likely to defeat the effect of his inſtructions for ſo deſirable an end. The more ſedate and attentive mind of Lydia miſſed no opportunity of improving her talents. Her voice was weak, and of no great extent; but ſhe played with ſuperior ſkill and judgment on the harpſichord and guitar; and her knowledge of muſic enabled her, when ſhe ſung, to give not only proper force to the meaning of her words, but a very delightful harmony to the ſound of her notes; and ſhe frequently revived the drooping ſpirits of her father with a ſong.

Nature ſeemed to have formed theſe lovely ſiſters as beautiful contraſts to each other.

The lively feelings of Roſina were always in the extreme. All her ſentiments were influenced by the moſt romantic ardour, or coldeſt indifference. Characters who did not at once win her favour were ſilently neglected; but thoſe who had the happineſs to pleaſe her, became immediately the idols of her heart, and images of the moſt exalted perfection. The ſympathies and antipathies of Lydia reſulted more from the ſlow and deliberate approbation of her mind, than from the warm and ſudden impulſes of her heart. She weighed the merits and demerits of the ſeveral candidates for her favour in the ſcales of reaſon and reflection; and indulged or ſuppreſſed her inclinations, as they appeared to be ſanctified by prudence, or condemned by indiſcretion. The errors, as ſhe conceived them, of her ſiſter's diſpoſition, ſhe obſerved with tender anxiety,

and trembled at the dangers to which ſhe thought they expoſed her; but her remonſtrances flowed from partiality, and therefore ſeldom contained ſufficient force to produce a ſerious effect. The preference of beauty was not given to either of them; for each had nearly an equal number of admirers. Some were charmed by the lively bloom, and auburn ringlets of Roſina; others were caught by the ſoft languor, and darker treſſes of Lydia: and as the cankerous worm, Envy, had never moleſted their pure and unſpotted hearts, the moſt cordial affection ſubſiſted between them.

Miſs Margaret Ouſeley, a maiden ſiſter of the Vicar's, only a few years younger than himſelf, formed a part of this domeſtic family; and took under her own peculiar care and inſpection the management of all the houſehold affairs. She was really as free

from

from the foibles generally attributed to perſons of her age and deſcription as can well be imagined. Her countenance was the index of a contented mind; for either time or philoſophy had enabled her to ſurmount the pangs of diſappointment; and except that ſometimes ſhe was apt to be a little haſty, and ſometimes a little obſtinate, none, but thoſe who knew her hiſtory, would have ſuſpected that ſhe was—an Old Maid. In her early youth ſhe had read all the novels and romances of the day, and ſtill retained a fond remembrance of the pleaſing ſcenes which they deſcribed; but of late years ſhe had endeavoured to alienate her mind from ſuch viſionary enjoyments, and repoſe upon the ſublimer ſtrains of poetry, and more comfortable conſolations of philoſophic truth. The attachment ſhe felt to her brother was ardent and ſincere; but ſhe entertained

tertained a higher opinion of herſelf, and her god-daughter Roſina, than of any two other mortals exiſting.

A judicious obſerver of human nature, Fielding, has remarked, that unconnected ladies form for themſelves ſome pleaſing attachments, to which their ſolitary affections may repair for ſolace; and that it is generally from the tribe of quadrupeds that they ſelect their favourites upon ſuch occaſions. Miſs Ouſeley, with a nobler predilection, adopted for her favourite a fine young girl, whoſe infancy and education ſhe had chiefly ſuperintended. Roſina had been the little companion of her travels into various parts of the kingdom, and a degree of cordiality had been cultivated between them which now approached almoſt to adoration. Miſs Ouſeley's purſe was ever open to gratify the little vanities of Roſina. Her intereſt with the Vicar was always engaged to procure his acquieſcence

acquieſcence to any ſcheme of pleaſure propoſed by Roſina. The praiſes of Roſina were her inceſſant theme; and her heart vibrated with unuſual joy when ſhe heard her commendations from the mouth of others. A perſonal reſemblance, however, which prevailed between them, afforded a remark, that the pleaſures ſhe felt from the praiſes of her niece's charms, aroſe from her conſidering them as an oblique approbation of her own. Whether this remark was founded in ill-nature or in human nature, is not certainly known. She, however, always openly declared her reſolution of leaving to Roſina a ſmall fortune, which had been bequeathed to her by a particular friend, and which her economy had conſiderably increaſed.

Gratitude was among the foremoſt of Roſina's virtues; and ſhe repaid her aunt's partiality by the ſtricteſt duty and moſt affectionate attention. Thoughtleſs and inconſiderate

conſiderate as ſhe appeared upon other occaſions, ſhe never ſilently ſuffered a diſreſpectful word to be mentioned in her preſence againſt the character of her aunt. It muſt be acknowledged, that ſhe had frequent opportunities of diſplaying her talents of defence; for every now and then, Miſs Ouſeley gave occaſion to ſuppoſe, that ſhe was one of thoſe beings whom nature ſeems to have created more for the purpoſe of affording amuſement to others, than of receiving pleaſure herſelf. But theſe little oddities in her temper were of ſhort duration, and Roſina almoſt doubted their exiſtence, for, in her eyes, to be her friend was always to be faultleſs.

In the garden of the Vicarage there was a ſhed, "o'ercanopied with luſcious woodbine," and ſurrounded by oaks, whoſe broad and antique branches, profuſely encircled with ivy, ſheltered it from the ſun, and

ſpoke

ſpoke it the ſeat of ancient friendſhip. This was a ſpot extremely beloved by Mrs. Ouſeley, and now kept ſacred to her memory. The redbreaſt had built a neſt within the ſafety of its ſhade; and the initials of Mrs. Ouſeley's name, carved by her huſband, on an old ſtump, were yet diſcernible. To this pleaſing retreat the Vicar frequently aſſembled his family, to enjoy the ſerene evening of a ſummer day. Here precepts of morality, and inſtructions of wiſdom would flow from his lips; while the ſucceeding melody of his daughters' voices ſweetly reſponded to the ſoftneſs of his ſoul.

The village of Lanſdowne was highly beautiful and pictureſque. The houſes were neat and uniform; and a river flowing on one ſide of it, gave it an air of luxuriancy and cleanlineſs. A bridge, built by Mr. Melville, who enjoyed a conſiderable property

perty in the neighbourhood, increaſed the beauty of the landſcape.

The Vicarage houſe was built upon a lawn, ſurrounded with flat and riſing ſpots of ground. Small clumps of various kinds of trees, were placed at pleaſing diſtances from each other, grouped with evergreens and perennial ſhrubs, whoſe different tints gave an air of richneſs and cultivation to the ſcene. One wing of the houſe was almoſt obſcured by a grove; the other preſented a neat appearance to the road, from which it was only ſeparated by a quickſet hedge. The gardens were equally formed for pleaſure, utility, and retirement. The river meandering at their foot, gave to the adjoining lands fertility and verdure; and thoſe ſtars of the earth, as Cowley ſtyles the painted populace of nature, wantoned

toned in parterres, and crept from beneath hedges of eglantine and myrtle. Two ſtumps of trees formed a groteſque bridge over the river, and led into a field which was divided from the garden by a ſlight paling. In this field was a cottage, where a family lived, whom Mr. Ouſeley's humanity had preſerved from ſtarving. They now indeed ſubſiſted partly by his bounty, and partly by the induſtry he afforded them the means of exerciſing. But they were contented and happy.

The head of this family was a very old man, whoſe long grey locks commanded involuntary reſpect. He was the chronicle of the village, and could recount anecdotes of all that had paſſed for more than half a century. Lydia paid him many viſits, and has ſat whole hours with him under a haw-

thorn

thorn buſh, upon a bench which he himſelf had made, liſtening, with admiration, to his tales.

We have now introduced our readers to the Ouſeleys, a family which, we hope, will not be unpleaſing to them. The picture we deſigned to exhibit, rough and imperfect as this ſketch of it may be, will preſent an outline, to the virtuous and tender hearted at leaſt, which the benevolent feelings of their own boſoms will fill up. The tints will be ſupplied in proportion to the warmth and fancy of the ſeveral artiſts. The ſubject, however, we truſt, will ſo forcibly affect the heart, that, while the mind owns the bleſſings beſtowed upon the Vicar's humble roof to be juſt, the tongue will exclaim, in the beautiful and affecting language of the poet,

" Bleſt be that ſpot, where cheerful gueſts retire,
" To pauſe from toil, and trim their evening fire;
" Bleſt that abode, where want and pain repair,
" And every ſtranger finds a ready chair;
" Bleſt be thoſe feaſts, with ſimple plenty crown'd,
" Where all the ruddy family around
" Laugh at the jeſts, or pranks, that never fail,
" Or ſigh, with pity, at ſome mournful tale;
" Or preſs the baſhful ſtranger to his food,
" And learn the luxury of doing good.

GOLDSMITH.

CHAP

CHAP. III.

AN INVITATION.

THE morning after the adventure with the Officers, Roſina was ſettling ſome flowers at the window which looked into the road, when two gentlemen paſſed by, from whom ſhe received a very polite ſalute. "Oh Lydia!" ſhe exclaimed, in an ecſtacy, "as I live, there are the Officers; you may be ſure they come this way on purpoſe to ſee us."

Lydia

Lydia very gravely remonſtrated with her ſiſter on the impropriety of having allowed thoſe young men to accompany them home.

"Will you never learn prudence, Roſina?" ſaid ſhe; "I am ſure you muſt confeſs that your fright laſt night was all pretence; for I have often ſeen you meet droves of cows without the leaſt fear, and laugh at me if I expreſſed any."

"My dear Lydia," replied Roſina, "does not papa always deſire us to do as we would be done by? Suppoſe now you and I had ſet our hearts on knowing two very pretty fellows, ſhould we not be extremely obliged to them for affording us the opportunity of gratifying our inclinations?"

Suſan, the ſervant-maid, who had juſt come from milking, haſtily laying down her pail, at this moment, ran into the parlour. "Oh lud! my ladies," cried Suſan, "who would

would have thought it? two fine gentlemen came into the field to me while I was milking. One of them wanted to kiſs me; nay, for that matter, he did kiſs me. 'And ſo, Sir,' ſays I, 'though I be a poor girl, I never lets any one be rude.' 'Why, child,' ſays he, 'ſure we are privileged.'—Indeed, my ladies, he was a mighty fine, handſome man.—— 'Well now, my pretty laſs,' ſays one of them, 'do you know who lives in that houſe?' 'Certainly I do,' ſays I, 'when it is my own maſter's.' So then he aſked the world and all of queſtions."

"Did you tell him who we were?"

"Aye, that I did; 'and let me ſee,' ſays I, 'who beats Miſs Roſina, or Miſs Lydia, in beauty?' but when I mentioned your aunt— 'Oh, ſome deviliſh old hag!' now them were the very words. Don't tell Mrs. Margaret, ladies;

ladies; ſhe would be very angry. One of the gentlemen ſpoke——"

"Well, well, he was very impudent," ſaid Roſina, "but did he ſay any thing about us?"

Here Miſs Margaret's footſteps were heard, and Suſan ran away.

"Dear Ma'am," ſaid Roſina, in a pretty childiſh manner, "Lydia has been ſcolding me about the Officers."

"Really, Liddy," ſaid Miſs Ouſeley; "I profeſs, I think you are a very ſtrange girl to be thus dictating to your elder ſiſter; ſhe has not lived ſo long under my care without knowing how to conduct herſelf. You have always been under the tuition of your father. He is a very good man; but he has not the taſte that I have. Only think, he would have chriſtened that child Roſe; how abominable! but I abſolutely inſiſted on her being called

Roſina. Roſina is a ſoft and pretty appellation, and looks tolerable enough at the bottom of a letter. I have read, child, I have read; books have improved my judgment; I have drank deep, as my dear Pope ſays, of the Pierian ſpring; but I never boaſt. I ſuffer my talents to lie hid in obſcurity, like the bloſſoms of ſpring in embryo, till the diſcernment of others, like the expanding gale, draws them forth to full perfection. It was very natural, my dear, for the Officers to be ſtruck with your ſiſter, and with you too, for you are really pretty. There is no one elſe in the village worth their knowing. A Vicar's family in every place is reſpectable. I dare ſay they had heard of us, of us all, my dear. You know Mr. Collins gets acquainted with every one in a moment. I fairly confuted all his arguments the other evening;

evening; and I dare ſay, he has told every body how cruelly I routed him."

Juſt as this learned harangue concluded, Mr. Ouſeley entered from his morning walk, in which he conſtantly paid ſome benevolent viſits, and the family ſat down to breakfaſt.

The morning was paſſed in its uſual harmony; but in the afternoon, a long converſation in Miſs Margaret's chamber, between her and Roſina, convinced Lydia that that ſome grand ſcheme was in agitation; eſpecially when Suſan was diſpatched with a pattern of blue ribbon to purchaſe ſome of the ſame ſort from a haberdaſher on the parade. She readily conjectured that the important object of the confederacy was to ſtorm the Officers' hearts; an enterpriſe in which ſhe was conſcious her aunt would act as an auxiliary. When they appeared at tea, the ribbon was diſcovered to ornament a

chip hat for Roſina, and to make a large top-knot for a very fine laced hood of Miſs Margaret's, which ſeldom made its appearance except on important occaſions.

To the parade they repaired. The little coquettiſh heart of Roſina fluttered at the ſight of her beaux; who inſtantly came up, and, paying their compliments with the moſt flattering politeneſs, joined the party with eaſy familiarity.

Miſs Margaret ſoon convinced them that the formidable dragon they had conjured up in the form of an old maid to guard the Heſperian fruit, did not really exiſt. She chatted to them with the greateſt affability and good-humour; and, on quitting the parade, invited them, with a young Officer of the party, to ſpend the following evening at the Vicarage—an invitation which rather ſurpriſed Lydia; but it had been previouſly

reſolved

reſolved upon between Miſs Margaret and Roſina.

Captain Melford, Captain Manning, and their young military friend, attended the ladies home. Miſs Margaret aſked them in, but did not preſs the invitation, as ſhe obſerved her brother walking on the lawn, and knew that he had no very favourable ſentiments of military men: a moſt unhappy prejudice, which ſhe had vainly endeavoured to eradicate; and which obliged her to conſider in what manner ſhe ſhould beſt diſcloſe to him the intimacy ſhe had formed with them, and her intention to encourage their viſits at the Vicarage.

The Officers, bidding their fair friends adieu, marched back to quarters. "Well, Manning," cried Melford, "are we not in luck? what a delicious little gipſy! ſuch eyes! ſuch lips! ſo enchantingly wild! what

think you now, Welford, of theſe natural curioſities? would you hang them up with your uncle's petrified muſcles and dried mandrakes?"

"Poſt me in Coventry!" replied Welford, "but I think her irreſiſtible. She has more fire than I ever ſaw woman poſſeſs. The other is indeed what you call ſtill life, a ſpecies of automaton."

"Upon my honour," ſaid Manning, "were I to give my opinion, I ſhould ſay that ſhe has more expreſſion in her countenance than her ſiſter. She is not indeed quite ſo dazzling; but her looks are more inſinuatingly ſweet."

"Aye, 'thoſe looks demure that deeply pierce the ſoul," cried Melford. "But come, there is a party in my room for *vingt-un*; Welford himſelf ſhall officiate as Ganymede; and in Burgundy, my boys, ruddy as the cheek

cheek of her I love, though not ſo exquiſite as nectar, we will toaſt the lovely charmers."

"Who are thoſe gentlemen that I ſaw at the door juſt now?" ſaid Mr. Ouſeley to his ſiſter.

"Gentlemen!" anſwered ſhe, with a flirt of her head, "why, very pretty gentlemen, my dear, they are ſome of the Officers who are lately come to Lanſdowne."

"Margaret," replied the Vicar, "you know that I do not wiſh my girls to form any intimacy with the military: the profeſſion is certainly honourable; but the members of it are too often libertines, who care not how much they embitter the peace of a family."

"Really, Sir," ſaid ſhe, "I thought that you had a higher opinion of your daughters' diſcretion. Beſides, Sir, you ſhould conſider, yes Sir, you ſhould conſider me and

my example. You can't think that I am included in the vulgar ſaying, 'that red coats are as deſtructive to women, as red bait is to gudgeons."

In this ſtrain ſhe continued for a conſiderable length of time; for to do her juſtice, taciturnity could not be reckoned among the number of her faults. Mr. Ouſeley, who loved quietude, and thought it well purchaſed by ſubmiſſion, gave up the contention. She was not, however, a generous enemy; for her brother never yielded any point to her, but ſhe repreſented to him the abſurdity of ever having contended it with her.

This converſation paſſed as they ſauntered on the lawn. They now entered the houſe; and the Vicar, pulling a chair to the fire, lighted his pipe. Miſs Margaret, however, continued to ring ſuch a peal in his ears, that at laſt it diſcompoſed his temper; and,

pulling

pulling the pipe from his mouth, he gave her ſuch an unexpected whiff as effectually ſilenced her. She was ſeized with a violent fit of coughing, and abruptly left the room, muttering the heavieſt invectives againſt the ſmoaky nation of the Dutch, whom ſhe ſtigmatized as the firſt planters of tobacco.

Lydia ſoon after came into the room with her father's ſupper. It conſiſted of a roll and a ſmall cream-cheeſe, of which he was remarkably fond; and ſhe generally had one, made by herſelf, ready for him againſt night. While he was eating his humble meal, he deſired her to read Gray's Elegy in a Country Church Yard. The tears gliſtened in his eyes as ſhe proceeded; but at this verſe, they fell on his cheek:

"Can ſtoried urn, or animated buſt,
"Back to its manſion call the fleeting breath?
"Can honour's voice provoke the ſilent duſt,
"Or flattery ſooth the dull cold ear of death?"

He ſighed; the ſoftneſs of her whom he had loſt was uppermoſt in his ſoul. Lydia was affected. "I won't read any more to-night, papa," ſaid ſhe, "I muſt ſing you a little air which Roſina has taught me." She accordingly took up her guitar and ſung it. Her father kiſſed her, called her his cherub, and, bleſſing her, retired to his apartment.

The next morning Miſs Margaret was immerſed in preparations for the reception of the Officers. Had Hogarth been alive, and wanted to delineate the picture of a Lady Mayoreſs employed in preparing an entertainment for the cits, he would probably have taken the outline of it from Miſs Ouſeley.

While ſhe was thus buſied, a lady arrived to pay her a viſit. This lady was a Mrs. Norris, who reſided in the village, between whom and Miſs Margaret a very ſpirited emulation

emulation ſubſiſted. There was that congeniality between them which is often far from producing mutual eſteem. Pretty much on an equality in ſenſe, merit, and other perfections, they entertained a wiſh and a hope of riſing above each other. In truth, a ſincere and cordial averſion ſubſiſted between them; though they frequently viſited, and ſometimes ſipped tea, in ſeeming harmony, from the ſame board.

Mrs. Norris had two daughters, whoſe beauty was unqueſtionable; and many thought them equal to the Vicar's. This compariſon, however, always provoked Miſs Margaret's indignation, and ſhe took every opportunity of ſetting up her nieces in oppoſition to the Miſs Norriſes; extolling their charms, exaggerating the number of their admirers, and lamenting the perſecution the poor girls ſuffered from thoſe whoſe

addreſſes they were, from want of inclination, abſolutely compelled to diſcourage.

To be caught in ſuch a ſcene of confuſion by ſuch a goſſip as Mrs. Norris, was inſupportable. Some one has ſaid that there are white lies, which are not very heinous; and, I ſuppoſe, Miſs Margaret was of this opinion, as ſhe had always declared to Mrs. Norris that ſhe left pickling, preſerving, and ſuch ſort of things, wholly to her brother's houſe-keeper. In fact, ſhe herſelf officiated in that capacity; for her brother's income was not calculated to ſupport the expence or parade of ſuch domeſtic appendages.

Slipping, therefore, ſoftly up ſtairs, ſhe put on a clean hood, handkerchief, and apron, and taking a book in her hand, marched very deliberately into the parlour.

"Excuſe

"Excuſe me, my dear neighbour," ſaid ſhe, "but when I am once deeply engaged upon the ſubject of the ſublime and beautiful, I always leave it with regret."

"Oh, Ma'am," cried Mrs. Norris, "I beg you will make no apology. When I am myſelf engroſſed by ſuch refined ſtudies, I hate to be interrupted. I am ſure, had I known how well you were employed, I ſhould have made it almoſt a ſcruple of conſcience to have intruded on you."

"Dear Mrs. Norris, you are ſo good, I am ſure I am particularly obliged to you for this viſit, when I am indebted two viſits to you; but we have been ſo much engaged of late. Were you at the Granthams? oh no! I recollect you were not; I was vaſtly ſorry that we had not the pleaſure of ſeeing you there; but now I recollect, there is a coolneſs between you and ſome part of that worthy

worthy family. Well, as I ſay to my brother, it is fooliſh to quarrel upon trifling occaſions. I acknowledge I like to keep fair with every one."

The real intention of Mrs. Norris's viſit, was to learn by what means the Miſs Ouſeleys had acquired ſuch an intimacy with the Officers, and to vent her feelings againſt them, for having neglected to give the preference to her daughters.

"So, Ma'am," ſays ſhe, "I hear you have got acquainted with the Officers; upon my word, I believe you'll not find it very eligible; they ſay they are a dangerous idle ſet; I know I would not allow my girls to have any thing to ſay to them."

"I commend your prudence very much," ſaid Miſs Margaret, with a titter; "but, thank God, I have no reaſon to be afraid of my girls. Indeed they were ſo impor-

tuned to ſuffer an introduction, that it could not be avoided. Poor things! I am ſure they feel ſufficiently for the pain they involuntarily give to others. I am ſure, I think at leaſt, that there are people equal to them; but opinions upon this ſubject will differ, and there is no accounting for taſte. 'Sir,' ſays I to a gentleman the other day, 'there are girls in the village very ſuperior to my nieces. I cannot conceive why you, and all the gentlemen, ſhould be dancing continually after them.'—'No, Madam, that is impoſſible,' cried he, 'mortal eyes never beheld ſuch charming creatures, ſuch tranſparent complexions, ſuch florid blooms! Lydia ſo like a turtle dove, and Roſina ſo like what you have been, nay, what you ſtill are.'—'Indeed, Sir,' ſaid I, 'I muſt acknowledge that I think them very handſome.'—'Every girl in the village is a ruſtic to them,' replied he.

he. 'Oh, Sir!' cried I, 'the Miſs Norriſes, ſure——"

"Yes, the Miſs Norriſes," ſaid their mother, ready to burſt with indignation.

But ſhe was prevented from venting it, by a violent ſcream which iſſued from the kitchen, and called Miſs Margaret haſtily from the parlour. A large bowl of cream had been left on the hob of the kitchen fire-place, which the ſagacious noſtrils of a cat had unfortunately diſcovered. Suſan perceiving the danger to which this rich collection was expoſed, had endeavoured to ſave it; but, in her fright, overturned a ſaucepan of plumbs, which were ſtewing on the fire.

Fielding has noticed the remark of ſome wiſe men, that misfortune never comes ſingle; and the truth of the apothegm, in the preſent inſtance, almoſt ſoured the ſweetneſs of Miſs Margaret's temper; but, re-

collecting

collecting her viſiter above ſtairs, ſhe compoſed her ſpirits, and returned into the parlour. During her abſence, Mrs. Norris had happily ſmothered her rage, and they parted with as cordial a hatred, and as much politeneſs, as ever.

Mr. Ouſeley was yet unacquainted with the coming of the expected gueſts; but as the hour of their arrival approached, it became neceſſary to conſult what meaſures were the moſt expedient to be adopted upon ſo critical an emergency. A ſynod therefore was ſummoned in Miſs Margaret's room; and, after much argument and great deliberation, it was agreed to take him by ſurpriſe. The arm-chair, in which Mr. Ouſeley uſually ſlumbered after dinner, was the inſtrument by which this meaſure was to be carried into execution. The cover of it had been worked by his wife; and it was

generally

generally the firſt object to which he directed his eyes on entering the room. But, when he came in to dinner, he looked, and looked in vain, for his chair.

"Brother," cried Miſs Margaret, with a ſmile on her face, "you are looking for what you cannot find."

"So I perceive, ſiſter; but the age of miracles is paſſed, and I cannot fancy that my chair has been removed by the hand of magic."

"No, indeed," ſaid ſhe, "it was by my orders. We expect company this evening."

During dinner-time an explanation enſued. The Vicar warmly remonſtrated, and Miſs Margaret as warmly petitioned and proteſted, until he gave up the point. He declared, however, that an intimacy with the Officers muſt not be encouraged.

Pleaſed

Pleaſed with the thoughts of his girls being happy, he ſoon reſumed his good-humour; to which the arch ſaucineſs of Roſina not a little contributed. Kiſſing them both, he called them idle flirts, ſaid he would leave to themſelves, enjoy a *tête-à-tête* with Horace, and call afterwards on Mr. Sedgeley.

"And pray, papa," ſaid Roſina, "tell him that I am very angry with him; he has not been here theſe three days. If he goes ſo often to viſit Miſs Mills, I ſhall be tempted to ſend her an Italian preſent."

"Aye," cried Miſs Margaret, "and tell him that the falling out of lovers is the renewal of love."

The moment the Vicar had left the houſe the Officers appeared at the gate; Roſina flew to the glaſs, Lydia herſelf took a ſly peep at it, and Miſs Margaret, ſmoothing a wrinkle

wrinkle in her apron, prepared to receive them in due form.

And now, if any pretty little Miſs, who is peruſing theſe pages, ſees any pretty little beau whom ſhe admires, we beg that ſhe, may diſcard the book, for the preſent, and give him a very civil reception.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

THE ENTERTAINMENT.

THE company were introduced into the beſt room, where every thing had been previouſly prepared, and placed in great order, for their reception. The converſation, as we may naturally ſuppoſe, ſoon became extremely brilliant. Miſs Margaret ſeized every opportunity to diſplay the vaſt extent of her underſtanding. Roſina coquetted with admirable dexterity. Lydia fell into a kind

kind of ſentimental flirtation with Captain Manning.

" I am afraid, gentlemen," ſaid Miſs Ouſeley, " that you find Lanſdowne rather dull and ſtupid."

" There are ſo many delightful reſources in its environs, Madam," ſaid Melford, " that whoever pronounces it dull, muſt be entirely devoid of taſte." While he uttered this obſervation his eyes were fixed on Roſina, and ſhe perfectly underſtood their meaning.

" Oh, you gentlemen of the Army," anſwered Miſs Margaret, " are ſo extravagantly polite! I had an uncle, Sir, and he uſed to ſay to me, ' Margaret, my dear, if ever you ſhould marry and have a ſon, ſend him into the Army; it is the only ſchool of true and genuine refinement."

" How

"How ſenſibly then, Madam, ought we to regret your diſinclination to matrimony!" cried Melford. "The ſon of a lady of ſuch ſupreme merit, and high accompliſhments, muſt have conferred diſtinguiſhed honour on the profeſſion."

"Ah, Sir!" replied Miſs Margaret, in a kind of ſigh, "there is, I am perſuaded, a particular deſtiny which directs theſe affairs."

"There are, I am convinced, Madam," exclaimed Manning, while he looked at Lydia, "real Divinities, who preſide over, and direct every emotion of the human ſoul; whoſe decrees in determining our fate, are, in my opinion, much more powerful and extenſive than thoſe aſcribed to the Deſtinies by the heathen mythology."

The idea of the heathen mythology operated like a charm upon the mind of Miſs Ouſeley.

Ouſeley. She had read, with ſome attention, the hiſtory of the Pantheon; and it appeared to her a ſubject of the deepeſt erudition. Proud of diſplaying her abilities upon all occaſions, ſhe ſeized the preſent opportunity with particular pleaſure; and immediately entered into a long harangue upon the nature of the ſeveral deities of the heathen world. From theſe premiſes, ſhe deduced, by a ſpecies of rhetorical ingenuity peculiar to herſelf, the injuſtice of thoſe puniſhments which Fate frequently inflicts by the means of involuntary agents, and inſtanced the pangs of immutual or deſpiſed love; hinting at the ſame time, with ſeeming lamentation, the number of admirers who, very unintentionally on her part, had ſuffered from the too powerful influence of her own charms; and concluding with ſome ſignificant remarks on the diſadvantages of too refined a taſte, the capricious

capricious nature of which had prevented her, notwithſtanding the many opportunities ſhe had had, from making the matrimonial choice which her mind would have approved.

The coldneſs of a converſation merely ſentimental, was not likely, under any circumſtances, to pleaſe ſo young and lively a ſociety for any length of time. The condenſing power, therefore, of Miſs Ouſeley's ſpeech, produced an effect ſomething like that of petrifaction, and at once ſuſpended the faculties of her audience. A momentary ſilence prevailed. She at length lamented that ſhe had not a party for cards, obſerving, by way of apology, that they had no intimacy with the folks of the village, and that all the faſhionable people of the neighbourhood were gone to the various watering places for amuſement. At this juncture a ſpecies of diverſion was whiſpered round

the company, which met with unanimous approbation. It was propoſed to play at ſome little game, ſuch as hunt the ſlipper, queſtions and commands, blind-man's buff, &c. &c. and at laſt the paſtime of chooſing a particular name, to which a correſponding anſwer was to be immediately given, or a forfeit paid, was adopted.

To aſſert that many miſtakes were intentionally made would perhaps be improper. Certain it is, however, that Miſs Margaret herſelf was ſometimes at a loſs for an anſwer, and Welford as often obliged to claim the penalty; Melford, giving him a ſly pinch, congratulated him on his good fortune.

Roſina, when it came to her turn to be called, laughed, ſtarted, pauſed, bluſhed, and chattered, till Melford effectually ſilenced her, by ſnatching the delicious forfeiture from her lovely lips.

Manning

Manning in attempting to follow the example of his friend with Lydia, was inſtantly repulſed. Glowing with bluſhes, and trembling with confuſion, ſhe ſtarted from her chair, and proteſted that ſhe would not play any longer at ſuch an odious game. The ſoul of Manning was charmed by this refined inſtance of female delicacy; and his contrition for having offended ſuch feelings, beamed with fine expreſſion from his eyes; but the attentions of Lydia were at this moment bent only on the ground; and the grave look by which Miſs Margaret intended to rebuke the ſcrupulous conduct of her niece, paſſed unobſerved. The incident, however, deranged the party, put a complete termination to the game, and made it neceſſary to deviſe a new ſcheme of pleaſure.

The firſt conſideration in the mind of Miſs Margaret, was, as we have already ob-

ſerved, to diſplay her own talents, the next was to diſplay the charms of her favourite Roſina, and ſhe therefore propoſed a ſong. Roſina, pleaſed with the opportunity of ſhewing the ſyren powers of her voice, was eaſily prevailed on to comply with her aunt's requeſt. She ſung with great correctneſs and fine expreſſion; and her merit was applauded to the ſkies. She called upon Captain Melford, who ſung a camp ſong. He called upon Manning, who, after ſome perſuaſion, prevailed upon Lydia to ſing for him. She accordingly took up her guitar, and ſung the following verſes from Goldſmith's Hermit:—

"And what is friendſhip but a name,
"A charm that lulls to ſleep,
"A ſhade that follows wealth or fame,
"And leaves the wretch to weep?

"And love is ſtill an emptier ſound,
"The modern fair-one's jeſt;
"On earth unſeen, or only found
"To warm the turtle's neſt."

The

The ſoft cadence of her voice, the melody of its trill, the pauſe—the emphatic pauſe which ſhe made at the laſt line, were inexpreſſibly beautiful.

Manning liſtened to her with rapture and ſurpriſe; new beauties roſe every moment to his view—beauties which he had before but tranſiently admired. The languor of her eyes, which denoted a ſoul of ſo much gentleneſs; their humid beams, which crept with ſweet infatuation on his ſoul, convinced him that lovely and ſimple nature only, is truly irreſiſtible.

"And do you believe the poet?" ſaid he to her, as ſhe finiſhed her ſong.

"I really don't know," ſhe replied, colouring, and withdrawing her hand, "he was a great judge of human nature."

"The aſſertion, that love is an empty ſound," cried Melford, "muſt be erroneous;

for the warm and tumultuous feelings of my own breaſt, at this moment, convince me to the contrary."

"The heart of a ſoldier," replied Roſina, "is always of a combuſtible nature; and though the leaſt ſpark ſets it in a flame, yet it ſoon becomes extinct."

"Barbarous ſuppoſition!" exclaimed Melford; "but it is the fate of thoſe who do not feel, to be inſenſible of the pain which they inflict; nor can they be accuſed, for

"Guiltleſs of harm, the bright deſtroyer lives,
"At random wounds, nor knows the wounds ſhe gives."

This rhapſody was accompanied by a ſoft and tender look, which Roſina returned with a ſaucy ſmile. She ſuffered him, however, to draw her hand gently under his arm, as the company walked from the parlour to the garden,

garden, where the fineneſs of the evening had been for ſome time ſoliciting their preſence.

It was now the ſweet, the dewy hour, when the reign of ſilence affords a feaſt to contemplation; the hour ſo beautifully deſcribed by Thomſon, when

"Evening yields
"The world to night; not in her winter-robe
"Of maſſy Stygian woof, but looſe arrayed
"In mantle dun. A faint erroneous ray,
"Glanc'd from th' imperfect ſurfaces of things,
"Flings half an image on the ſtraining eye;
"While wavering woods, and villages, and ſtreams,
"And rocks, and mountain-tops, that long retain'd
"Th' aſcending gleam, are all one ſwimming ſcene,
"Uncertain if beheld."

A lighted candle, which ſtood in the window of the cottage, threw a glimmering light acroſs the field, through the branches

of the trees in the garden. The curioſity of the Officers was excited to know from whence it proceeded.

"It proceds from the cell of a Derviſe," ſaid Roſina, "whom I keep to give me abſolution for all the ſins I commit."

"Shall we go to confeſſion together?" ſaid Melford.

"And would you truſt yourſelf there with me?" replied Roſina; "how do you know but I might deceive you; and inſtead of leading you to the cell of a confeſſor, conduct you to a cave ſimilar to that of Trophonious? you would not be well pleaſed with the metamorphoſis it might occaſion."

"The cave of Trophonious!" ſaid Welford, muſing; "why, I never heard of that gentleman nor his cave before."

"Oh! it lies in the ſouth-eaſt parts of Europe, on the confines of Aſia," replied Roſina.

Roſina. "The beaux, jeſſamies, and wild young men of Bagdad were frequently ſent to it to be civilized; and they came out the prettieſt ſentimental fellows in the world."

"I am ſure," ſaid Lydia, "a ſhort confinement there would be of infinite ſervice to you, Roſina; for I believe you will never grow tame."

Roſina, during the unthinking hilarity of converſation, either ſaid or did ſomething which Melford conſtrued into a challenge. She proteſted that he had miſtaken her meaning; he explained, ſhe ran, and he purſued her into the little ſhed.

Manning, by a gentle preſſure, endeavoured to pull Lydia in after them; but ſhe inſtantly flew back, and, in a tone of diſpleaſure, inſiſted on his letting her go. True delicacy will overawe the boldeſt manners. Manning's, however, was not of that de-

ſcription. He admired, he adored; he revered the timidity of innocence, and to be its guardian was his higheſt happineſs and greateſt glory.

Roſina ſcreamed, and, running haſtily from the ſhed, told Melford that his conduct was intolerably impertinent. She pulled ſome flowers, which were a little deranged, from her boſom, and, throwing them at him, declared that her ſiſter would be very angry with him for ſpoiling the roſes of her favourite moſs-tree. He proteſted—ſhe ran away—he followed—ſhe laughed—he rallied—and her diſpleaſure vaniſhed.

Supper was now announced; good-humour and complacency preſided at the board. The laughing hours paſſed happily away; but in the midſt of conviviality the moment of departure arrived. The door was

was opened by the hand of reluctance, and the gentlemen unwillingly took their leave.

Melford, from the obſervations he had made, concluded that Roſina was a confirmed coquette, and therefore thought her a fair object of gallantry. The rational behaviour of Lydia had made a very different impreſſion upon the mind of Manning; he revered the ſoftneſs of her heart, and admired the good ſenſe which flowed from her lips. Welford ſwore they were both angels. "There is no reſiſting," cried he, "the quick fire which ſhoots from the eyes of the eldeſt; and the ſoftneſs of the other imperceptibly ſaps the foundation: but drill me, if the old cat, of an aunt, is not inſupportable! May I be ſhot if I don't think a vain old woman, one of your has-beens, is more teazing than a ſwarm of moſchettoes!"

CHAP. V.

THE PUBLIC BREAKFAST.

To relate the ſeveral gradations through which the Officers advanced from a firſt acquaintance to intimacy, and from thence to familiarity, with the Ouſeleys, would be tedious: ſuffice it to ſay, therefore, that they were for ever at the Vicarage. Mr. Ouſeley was frequently abſent; and his natural love of quietude made him diſcontinue his fruitleſs endeavours to diſcourage their viſits.

The

The village already reſounded with the fame of the mighty conqueſts which the Miſs Ouſeleys had achieved. The buzzing tongue of ſlander at many tables, particularly at that of Mrs. Norris, began to join the word imprudence with the name of Roſina. Even Lydia, whoſe pure and ſpotleſs character the moſt poiſoned ſhaft of calumny could not taint, was only thought more artful, but not leſs indiſcreet than her ſiſter.

Oh! why does that inordinate love of admiration, ſo often, and ſo fatally obſcure every brighter faculty in the female ſoul? How often does it caſt the darkeſt ſhade over the pureſt innocence, and, miſſing the approbation it ſo ardently aims at, meets only with contempt! The calm and diſpaſſionate eye of candour, indeed, will diſcriminate the follies of vanity from the errors of imprudence, and the guilt of vice; but

in

in the broad and undiſtinguiſhing cenſure of the world, they are generally confounded with each other. The charms which aſpire to univerſal praiſe muſt be contented with occaſional diſappointments; but the modeſt unaſſuming manners of humble beauty, always inſpire a ſenſibility that creates and cements eſteem; and to ſuch characters the heart of man pays the tribute of admiration with ſpontaneous pleaſure.

Roſina's rage for conqueſt induced her ſometimes to beſtow upon Welford the favour of her ſmiles; and his viſits became at laſt ſo frequent at the Vicarage, that Melford, who poſſeſſed the conceited wiſh of monopolizing every attention to himſelf, determined to do ſomething to prevent his any longer ſharing that enviable pleaſure. To accompliſh this purpoſe, he perſuaded Welford to write a letter to Roſina, declaring

ing the violence of his paſſion; and he promiſed to become the advocate of his cauſe.

The vain and credulous Welford eaſily yielded to the flattering and artful ſuggeſtions of his ſuppoſed friend; and was not a little delighted by the idea of being able to boaſt of his ſucceſs to his brother Officers; in whoſe opinions, however, he was conſidered very little better than a good-natured, inoffenſive, and inexperienced boy.

Roſina ſecretly deſpiſed Welford as a ſhallow coxcomb; yet, as he added to the number of her conqueſts, and, of courſe, flattered her pride, ſhe receive the epiſtle with ſecret pleaſure.

Melford had followed the bearer of the letter to the Vicarage; and Roſina had ſcarcely finiſhed the peruſal of it when he arrived. Her vanity made her ſolicitous that he ſhould ſee it. She accordingly placed

it

it in a book which ſhe had been reading, and laid it beſide her on the table. On this book ſhe frequently caſt her eyes, ſmiled, looked at Melford, and ſmiled again. Significant ſmiles from her lips he was ſure comprehended ſomething. He ſeized the book, ſhe prettily ſtruggled to get it from him, and in the conteſt, the paper fell upon the ground. The contents of it were as follow:—

TO MISS OUSELEY.

" Have not my eyes already confeſſed the feelings of my heart, or muſt my pen acknowledge that you have taken the citadel? Yes, Madam, may my firſt battle be my laſt, if I don't adore you! may grape-ſhot be my end, if I don't think you beautifully angelic! may I be poſted in Coventry every

every day in the week, if I do not prefer your company to all others! Had Helen poſſeſſed half your charms, I ſhould have laughed at a ten years' ſiege. Had Cleopatra half your wit, I ſhould have thought a fate more wretched than Antony's enviable. Your ſmiles are more pleaſing than glory or fame; and your frowns more dreadful than the ſentence of a Court-martial, or a charge of heavy horſe in the midſt of a defile. Oh, award not my fate with rigour! but pity

"the moſt devoted

"of your admirers,

"JAMES WELFORD."

"This letter, Roſina, is an inſtance of your cruelty," cried Melford; "how can you diſtract the peace of a poor boy in this manner?"

"Pray,

"Pray, Sir," ſaid Roſina, "how can I help it?"

"No, Madam," replied Melford, "you captivate involuntarily, and then ſport with the hearts you find you have enſlaved: but, ſuppoſe, as I think I know your real ſentiments upon this ſubject, you were to pretend that this curious letter fell into your aunt's hands, and that ſhe, in the extravagance of her vanity, conceived it to be written to herſelf. Do you write an anſwer to it in her name; Welford has, I know, a greater reſpect for her than you may poſſibly imagine, and I will carry on the deception."

Roſina ſtarted at a propoſal, the adoption of which might eventually place the character of her aunt in an awkward predicament. But there was ſomething vivacious in the idea, highly pleaſing to the natural levity of her diſpoſition—and it was Melford

who

who preſſed her to comply. Sitting down, therefore, together, they framed the following epiſtle.

TO JAMES WELFORD, ESQ.

"SIR,

"I was, at firſt, ſurpriſed at your letter; but that ſurpriſe ſoon vaniſhed when I recollected that the celebrated Ninon de L'Enclos conquered at the age of eighty. It is impoſſible, therefore, for me, at ſo much earlier a period, to doubt the power of my charms; but the glory of the conqueſt muſt be my only gratification. If the violence of your paſſion ſhould oblige you to fall upon your ſword, both our names will be eternized in the annals of renown. Love would drop a tear over your fate; while Fame would wreath a laurel for one

who

who could withſtand the addreſſes of a young, an ardent, and an accompliſhed lover. Tempt me not, oh thou flatterer! let me remain free, nor load my tender heart with the oppreſſive burthen of an inſupportable paſſion. You are the Shalum who would delude me, like that conſtant admirer, with enticing words, to alter my ſtate. If I were to draw a compariſon between the antediluvian age and the preſent, may I not ſuppoſe the incomparable Princeſs Hilpa, at the period mentioned by the Spectator, was on an equality with me in years? and ſhe charmed, you know, more than one.

"But though I am delighted with the waving of your feathers, and the perfumed breezes of your toupee, I cannot place them in competition with the riches of wiſdom, with which nature, time, and ſtudy, have ſo abundantly ſtored my mind. Think then

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no more of me. Speak not, write not, viſit not, leſt the fire of my eyes, more fatal I find than the flaſh of cannon, ſhould ſtrike thee with confuſion. Let glory be thy miſtreſs. To war! to war! I cannot wiſh for the prolongation of your life, rendered wretched by the pangs of hopeleſs love. No, I ſhould rather pray that the arrow of ſome mighty Indian might end an exiſtence on which I have innocently and involuntarily entailed ſuch miſery.

" May the little weeping Loves and Graces procure a ſolitary and ſacred ſpot for thy manes! May ſome kind hand convey to me thy ſcalp, which I ſhall treaſure with tender remembrance! May thy ſpirit, freed from human incumbrance, become, like Ariel, the guardian of your Belinda!

" MARGARET OUSELEY."

This

This letter Melford himſelf conveyed. The confuſion which poor Welford diſcovered when he received it is not to be deſcribed. He read it over and over again, and almoſt doubted the evidence of his own ſenſes. "What induced the old hag," cried he, "to think that I was in love with her? May I be ſhot if I would not ſooner fly from her than from a ſhell!"

"My dear fellow," cried Melford, "I am afraid we have committed an egregious miſtake. The letter you know was directed to Miſs Ouſeley, and the aunt, I ſuppoſe, has received it inſtead of the niece. Old women you know are extremely conceited, and ſhe has immediately conceived that you were violently ſmitten with her. Take my advice, and keep out of her way. Don't go near the houſe; for, in caſe ſhe ſhould relent, ſhe might inſiſt that you had propoſed for her,

her, and either compel you to marry her, or to meet ſome of her relations. The alternative might be diſagreeable, and expoſe you to ridicule."

"I marry her!" exclaimed Welford. "Oh, may I be fired from the mouth of a cannon, or roaſted on Mount Veſuvius, before I ſubmit to ſuch a fate!"

"Adhere to my advice, however," cried Melford, "and keep out of her way."

Poor Welford was eaſily impoſed on; and though a moment's reflection on the abſurdities of the letter, might have convinced him that it was a fabrication, he became at once a dupe to his vanity.

Melford, delighted with the ſucceſs of his ſcheme, communicated it to Manning. The aid and aſſiſtance which Roſina had given to it called from him ſome very ſevere and pointed animadverſions on the impro-

priety

priety of her acquieſcence; but her conduct was defended by Melford with more than uſual warmth.

When the Officers of the corps were aſſembled, the enſuing day, at dinner, Melford called for a pint bumper of wine, and drank it off to the health of the incomparable antediluvian Chineſe Princeſs Hilpa. The Officers ſtared at the myſtery of the toaſt; but the whole ſecret was ſoon divulged, and poor Welford was ſaluted by the title of the enticing little Shalum: till quite provoked, half threatening Melford, and openly muttering imprecations againſt his dear Belinda, he abruptly retired, and left his treacherous coadjutor maſter of the field.

We ſhall not call them prudes in virtue who condemn Roſina for what ſhe had done. Partial as we are to her, we muſt acknowledge the great impropriety of her conduct,

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in being tempted, by any man, to write a letter, the conſequences of which might recoil ſeverely on herſelf, and place the character of her aunt, whom ſhe was bound by every tie of gratitude to venerate and love, in a ridiculous light: but ſhe viewed it only as an innocent and laughable frolic.

The Officers, in return for the civilities they had received from the inhabitants of Lanſdowne and its environs, propoſed to give a very elegant public breakfaſt, to which our heroines received the firſt card of invitation. Roſina, ever emulous of diſtinction, wiſhed, upon this important occaſion, to appear a ſtar of the firſt magnitude; and ſhe employed the intermediate time in various ſchemes to render her charms uncommonly captivating.

In Miſs Margaret's wardrobe were ſome very rich and beautiful ſilk gowns, which, in former days, had contributed to adorn her perſon, and extend her conqueſts. On one of theſe gowns, the colour of which was particularly beautiful, Roſina had frequently caſt a wiſtful eye; and ſhe now felt an ardent deſire to obtain it.

Taking her work one morning into her aunt's chamber, ſhe began the attack.

"Well, my dear aunt, don't you long for the pleaſure of this public breakfaſt? I am ſure it will be delightful. The military always render their amuſements enchanting."

"Very true, my dear," ſaid Miſs Margaret. "I ſuppoſe the Miſs Norriſes are to be there. The Millſes are making moſt beautiful dreſſes of lilac. How abſurd is it for thoſe girls to pretend to elegance, without poſſeſſing the rudiments on which it is founded!

founded! you, I dare ſay, in a much plainer gown, will look vaſtly better."

"It is very true, aunt, that genuine elegance will ſtrike the diſcerning few," replied Roſina; "but the vulgar herd, which compriſes the generality of the people, like children at a puppet-ſhow, are only ſtruck with the beauty of appearances, and I am ſure none of my dreſſes will produce that effect."

"Your ſentiments upon this ſubject are very juſt, child," cried her aunt; "and, now I recollect, I have a gown in my wardrobe, which, altered, will become you exceedingly. Ah, Roſina! but I will not boaſt, many are the hearts I have ſmitten in that dreſs."

The pale pink luſtring was then produced. Roſina received it with tranſport. The moſt endearing epithets were beſtowed

on her charming, good aunt; and her little giddy head, almoſt turned with ecſtacy, anticipated a thouſand conqueſts, while ſhe was employed in altering it.

The ſcene of this rural entertainment was a gentleman's cottage, charmingly calculated for a *féte champétre;* which the Officers, with great addreſs, had procured the uſe of for this occaſion. The ſituation of it was ſtrikingly beautiful. It ſtood on a riſing ground, ſurrounded in the front by a large ſhrubbery, through which various little labyrinths led to a number of ſeats, formed, with artleſs texture, of entwined oſiers. On the other ſide it was bounded by variegated hedges and extenſive meadows.

The river, ruſhing impetuouſly over ſome rocks, formed a fine caſcade. The oppoſite banks were covered with a thick wood, the broad o'erhanging and verdant

branches

branches of which were beautifully reflected in the clear part of the ſtream, and gave new tints to the water, that ruſhed ſome yards, diſcoloured from the fall. A temple of the lighteſt architecture, to which there was a deſcent by a flight of ſteps, apparently too irregular to have been the work of art, commanded a cloſer view of the caſcade. A grotto, which ſtood on the other ſide, covered with creeping ivy, and encruſted with coral, only wanted a hermit to make it completely a hermitage.

Ruſh chairs with cane backs, deal dreſſers, wainſcot tables, delft ware plates, birds neſts hung up in feſtoons, window curtains of net-work, and ſmall vaſes of flowers, were the furniture which adorned the cottage.

The long expected morning at length arrived; and a large *partie* very ſoon aſ-

ſembled; among whom our heroines were particularly diſtinguiſhed.

Roſina was dreſſed in the pink luſtring, and looked uncommonly lovely. The glow of conſcious beauty gave to her lively features more than their wonted animation. Her dark hair fell profuſely, in graceful negligence, upon a neck, that rivalled in whiteneſs the pureſt ſnow. A large green bouquet ſhaded her boſom, a light hat was fixed on one ſide her head, in a careleſs manner, and decorated with a wreath of wild roſes.

Lydia, though leſs adorned, looked not leſs lovely. A white muſlin gown was drawn back by bloſſom-coloured ribbons; and a cap, ornamented with tiffany of the ſame colour, added ſoftneſs to a face memorable for its delicacy and ſweetneſs.

Roſina, all life and animation, received a thouſand direct and indirect compliments upon

upon the elegance of her dreſs and the beauty of her appearance; flattery, nonſenſe, and adulation aſſailed, or rather delighted her ears: ſhe flirted with all her admirers, promiſed to dance with twenty, chatted with affability to thoſe ſhe particularly liked, and looked with conſcious triumph on the reſt. Her vanity, however, experienced the ſevereſt mortification.

Melford was convinced in his own mind that ſhe loved him. Wiſhing, therefore, to enjoy the honour of ſo proud a victory, he had boaſted to Manning of his ſucceſs, in terms of the vaineſt glory. Manning, either doubting its truth, or wiſhing to leſſen the arrogance of his friend, ſeemed to diſbelieve the exiſtence of the fact. Melford, piqued by this incredulity, had promiſed to give him, at the preſent meeting, the moſt unequivocal proofs of the empire he had

gained over Roſina's heart. For this purpoſe he had determined to devote all his attentions, during the amuſements of the day, to ſome other woman, and exulted in the idea of convincing Manning of his triumph, by exhibiting to the whole company, the uneaſineſs he was well aſſured Roſina muſt unavoidably feel.

Men, let them boaſt as they pleaſe, are as vain, capricious, and coquettiſh as the ſex they admire; equally fond of conqueſt, of diſplaying their power, and of inflicting a cruel pain on the hearts they have ſubdued. Let women, therefore, imprint this leſſon on their minds, that men, in the tyranny of their hearts, enjoy a ſecret ſatisfaction in humbling the very beauty their praiſes have rendered vain.

Roſina, on her part, unconſcious of any particular partiality, conceived that ſhe had gained

gained great aſcendancy over the heart of Melford, and had ſilently reſolved, by her exertions that day, to complete the conqueſt. Joy graced her face with the ſmiles of triumph.

When ſhe entered the ball-room Melford paid no attention to her, but appeared happily engroſſed by the company and converſation of Miſs Norris, a perſon whom he knew Roſina particularly diſliked. As ſhe paſſed the chair in which her rival ſat, he took the opportunity of paying ſome compliments loud enough for her to hear. But he waited with painful pleaſure for the effect which he flattered himſelf his indifference would ultimately produce. His heart glowed with rapture for Roſina, and his eyes wandered after her whenever ſhe croſſed the room. He ſecretly envied thoſe who fluttered round her; and felt the keeneſt anguiſh when he

beheld her ſenſible of the aſſiduties they paid. The gratification of vanity, however, and the hope of triumphing at laſt, rivetted him to a perſon he abhorred.

Roſina obſerved his indifference, and felt the ſevereſt mortification from his neglect. Her chagrin for a moment got the better of her ſpirits; but the natural levity of her temper, the gaiety of her diſpoſition, the pleaſures of flattery, and the pride of her heart, effected their reſtoration; and becoming, by their influence, more wildly animated than ever, ſhe gave life to all around her.

The contented mind of Lydia was a ſtranger to the pangs of a diſappointed coquette. She was not, however, inſenſible to the pleaſures of deſerved applauſe, a moderate deſire of which is neceſſary and laudable.

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The epithet, beautiful, gave her cheeks a warm and blushing glow. Her eyes derived new luſtre from the glance of admiration; and though ſhe was not ſo ſkilled as Roſina, "in patching ſcandal, repartee," ſhe was by no means deſtitute of that brilliancy of expreſſion, upon which the pleaſures of converſation ſo materially depend.

The love of praiſe has been wiſely implanted in the human ſoul; it is the crowning wreath which urges induſtry to attain perfection, and excites our anxious endeavours to place the gifts of nature, and the embelliſhments of art, in the moſt pleaſing point of view.

Manning advanced towards her, and leaning his arm on the back of her chair, ſaid he could ſcarcely flatter himſelf that ſhe was diſengaged; but if ſhe was, he ſolicited the honour of her hand in the country-

dance. She had juſt promiſed a young Enſign. Manning then hoped he ſhould be made happy upon the change of partners, and ſhe granted his requeſt. He paid her a compliment upon her kindneſs, which, while it called a riſing bluſh into her cheek, obtained from her eyes a look of ineffable ſweetneſs.

She admired the merit, which her inexperienced heart aſſured her Manning poſſeſſed. His ſenſe, his ſenſibility, were congenial to her own. He appeared to have gained great knowledge of the world. His vivacity was tempered by politeneſs, his graver moments by wiſdom and humanity. She always bluſhed at his approach. Her eyes, the harbingers of every feeling, ſparkled as he ſpoke. Flattery from him was conveyed with ſo ſweet a charm, that

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it excited emotions in her breaſt alarming to the ſafety of her heart.

Although Roſina had given hopes to ſeveral of her admirers that ſhe would dance with them, yet, being thoroughly ſatisfied that Melford would, at laſt, ſolicit her hand, ſhe had not abſolutely engaged herſelf to any in particular.

When the dance was beginning Melford approached her. "Don't you dance, Miſs Ouſeley?" ſaid he.—"Certainly, Sir," ſhe replied.—"Oh, I thought you could not be ſo cruel as to render ſo many ſlaves unhappy!"—Then, uttering a careleſs compliment he took Miſs Norris by the hand and led her to the ſet.

The tear of indignation ſtarted in her eyes. She could ſcarcely ſuppreſs the appearance of her mortification; but, calling every ſentiment of pride to her aſſiſtance,

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and determined not to give Melford an opportunity of triumphing over her diſtreſs, ſhe immediately gave her hand to a gentleman who had been long requeſting it, was led with *éclat* to the dance, and ſupported her ſpirits and vivacity ſo well, that Manning, who was ſtanding next couple to Melford, aſked him, in a ſly ironical whiſper, how he could diſtreſs the poor girl ſo much.

Melford, irritated by this ſarcaſm, vowed that ſhe was the moſt finiſhed coquette exiſting. He reſolved, however, to reinſtate himſelf in her favour, that he might, by additional aſſiduity, obtain a more certain conqueſt over her heart.

She received his firſt advances towards reconciliation with the indignant frown which naturally ariſes from inſulted pride. But his addreſſes were the perfection of artifice. He was acquainted with the moſt intricate

labyrinths

labyrinths of the female heart; and well knew how to apply the balm of adulation to the wound he had made. Softened by the humility of his submission, pleased by the apparent candour with which he owned her provocation to be just, and led by the more powerful inclination of her own breast, she, at length, consented to dance with him.

Lydia appeared to be excessively fatigued after having finished the second dance; and Manning earnestly requested that he might lead her to a kind of arbour in the garden, far from the noise of the ball-room, where she might rest herself without interruption. The truth is, that her spirits had been surprised into a degree of agitation beyond her strength, by some very unexpected professions from Manning during the dance. To

the arbour, however, ſhe conſented to be led.

A band of muſic had been placed in the temple we have before deſcribed, and its martial melody reſounding through the woods produced a fine effect. The waters falling from the caſcade frequently mixed in concert with the ſound.

The arbour, not far diſtant from the temple, was ſurrounded by a young ſhrubbery of aromatic plants, whoſe ſcents impregnated the air with a delicious perfume. The conviviality of the ball-room was juſt heard in a confuſed and indiſtinct ſound. The retreat, however, was not unobſerved; but the minds of its preſent poſſeſſors were too much engaged to be diſturbed by "the loud laugh which ſpoke the vacant mind."

In this arbour Manning and Lydia appeared like two lovers who had withdrawn themſelves

themſelves from the tumultuous, and unſatisfactory joys of public pleaſure, to the more refined and exquiſite delight of interchanging ſoul for ſoul, in tranquil, ſympathetic converſation.

For a few moments embarraſſment deprived both of them of the power of ſpeech; there was a contagious baſhfulneſs in their eyes very likely to produce reciprocal confuſion; Manning certainly looked as ſilly as Lydia.

Manning, however, opened the converſation by ſome common topic; Lydia anſwered confuſedly; and both were equally unintereſted about the ſubject.

Their own ſituation, at length, ſuggeſted an idea of the pleaſures of rational converſe and temperate amuſement. Upon this ſubject Lydia, regaining her compoſure, expreſſed

preſſed herſelf with the perſpicuity, eaſe, and elegance, of a cultivated mind.

"Society," ſaid Captain Manning, "is the cement of human nature; by mutual kindneſſes it ſoftens aſperity, and by emulation it promotes virtue. The heart of man, created for delight, would pine in laſſitude, or grow ſour with miſanthropy, if it were deprived of ſocial intercourſe. Our primeval parent himſelf, amidſt the glories of a new world, and the charms of a Paradiſe, found himſelf not completely bleſſed, till Heaven ſent its laſt beſt gift on earth, a companion to raiſe him to the ſummit of felicity. I know not which is the moſt blameable, the being who ſtoically abjures the enjoyments of life, or he who wantonly abuſes them: both characters pervert the bleſſings beſtowed by Providence for the alleviation of human care."

"Society,

"Society, indeed," ſaid Lydia, "alleviates every care, and gives a finer charm to every pleaſure. The ſympathy of affection is a balm for the ſevereſt woe; and the boſom of friendſhip is a reſource of comfort to the moſt afflicted heart."

"Balmy, precious, ineſtimable reſource!" cried Manning, with rapture. "Oh bleſſed! thrice, thrice bleſſed is the man, who, if oppreſſed by adverſity, can, in the ſweet, the ſacred repoſitory of a gentle boſom, find peace, comfort, ecſtacy! who, if elated by proſperity, will, from the ſame happy ſource, be taught to temper his tumultuous tranſports, and remember the ſacred admonition, "that he who gives can alſo take away!" Oh Lydia, Lydia!" he continued, ſeizing her hand in tranſport, "why, why do we meet but to part? why do we know but to love? why do we love, but to feel torture?"

Lydia

Lydia aroſe from her ſeat—trembled—ſat down again—her face was crimſoned with bluſhes. She endeavoured to withdraw her hand from Manning's—her head ſunk back—her colour fled—it was inſupportable.

A declaration of love from the man for whom alone her heart had ever felt a flame, was the ſtrong idea which his warm expreſſions implanted on her mind: a man, poſſeſſing every grace which could charm the eye or warm the heart; whoſe mild virtues had ſtolen ſilently and unperceived into her boſom, and inſpired a ſoft and gentle paſſion, which purity might well indulge without a bluſh. A ſudden emotion ruſhed through her trembling frame, and ſhe felt her body ſinking under the tumult of her mind.

Manning, penetrated by her ſenſibility, caught her with ardour to his boſom, and kiſſed away a tear which, at that inſtant, fell upon

upon her cheek. He ſupported her for ſome moments; but when ſhe recovered her ſenſes, and recollected what had paſſed, a native ſenſe of delicacy overwhelmed her with confuſion; and, ſtarting from his arms, ſhe inſiſted on his immediately conducting her back to the room.

Manning made her no reply: ſurpriſed at his ſilence, ſhe turned ſuddenly round to reprove his neglect. He was fixed in motionleſs dejection; his ſenſes abſorbed in agonizing thought: a wild and diſordered look ſat upon his countenance, a pallid hue overſpread his cheek. Alarmed at his ſituation, her diſpleaſure vaniſhed. Love, and every gentle paſſion crowded to her heart. She felt their empire; and in the warm tumults of her ſoul, the expreſſions, "Manning! oh Manning!" burſt, in the tendereſt accents, from her lips. He ſtarted at the ſound. An impetuous

ſtream

ſtream of ſorrow guſhed from his eyes. He gently raiſed his head, and ſighed. Looking at Lydia, he preſſed her hand, with ſilent tranſport, to his breaſt, and led her, trembling, from the arbour.

Lydia endeavoured, as they walked along, to calm the perturbations of her mind; but ſhe ſtrove in vain to ſuppreſs the tears which ſtole in ſilence down her cheek.

As they approached the cottage, he parted with her hand, and turning to her, exclaimed in faltering accents—"Oh Lydia! ſhould I never be able to expreſs the feelings of my heart, let your fancy tell you what my tongue refuſes to explain."

Lydia entered the room ſcarcely knowing where ſhe was; and when her ſiſter aſked her where ſhe had been, ſhe ſtarted with confuſion and ſurpriſe.

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To Roſina's thoughtleſs mind her ſiſter's embarraſſment created no ſuſpicion; but Melford, who was ſtanding by her, eaſily divined the cauſe.

The good-nature of Melford was ſometimes miſled by a pleaſure for teazing. "Have you been wandering in Platonic delight through the ſhades with Manning?" ſaid he; "or has he been making love to you? nay, don't bluſh: it is an old trick with him, I aſſure you; he makes love to every handſome woman he ſees: he has got the prettieſt ſentimental knack of courtſhip imaginable; but don't mind one word he ſays: he is the moſt inconſtant creature breathing; be cautious, therefore, that he don't enſlave your heart."

"It cannot poſſibly be in any danger," anſwered Lydia, with heſitation: "The various

various perfections of ſo many beaux ſecure it from becoming the ſlave of any."

The ſarcaſm which Manning had whiſpered in Melford's ear on his expected triumph over Roſina dwelt upon his memory; and, in plaguing Lydia upon his account, he felt ſomething like retaliation. Had he thought, however, that his obſervations would have ſo ſenſibly wounded her heart, he would have died ere he had perſiſted in the cruelty.

Selecting a young lady of conſiderable beauty from the reſt of the company:— "Don't you admire that girl?" continued he; "Manning thinks her divine; ſhe is his conſtant toaſt. Is ſhe not lovely?"

"Yes," ſaid Lydia, faltering and turning pale, "I think ſhe is."

"Perhaps you think his taſte peculiar. You look unwell: come, I have been

waiting on purpoſe to dance with you; a little exerciſe will be of ſervice to you."

Lydia begged of him very earneſtly to excuſe her; but he perſiſted in his requeſt, until ſhe was obliged peremptorily to refuſe him.

"It is great preſumption in me, certainly, to expect the honour of your hand, after it has once been given to Captain Manning," cried Melford; "but ſince you are determined to dance with none but him, I ſhall only hint to you that it is contrary to the etiquette of the room."

Lydia, conceiving theſe obſervations to be rather ſerious; conſented, very much againſt her inclination, to go down the ſet with him. She rejoiced when it was over; nor was Melford ſorry, for, during the dance, he obſerved Roſina coquetting away with Welford. She was indeed enjoying

the fruits of her literary correſpondence with him, by ſilently laughing at his embarraſſment, when ſhe taxed him with being abſent from the Vicarage, and hinted that ſhe knew and was extremely ſorry for the occaſion of it.

The entertainment of the morning, at length, concluded, and the company returned to their reſpective homes. Roſina was perfectly ſatisfied with the adulation ſhe had received; but poor Lydia's mind was occupied by new ſenſations, which alternately perplexed, ſoftened, pained, and pleaſed her. If the words of Manning had been difficult to interpret, his looks, his agitation, his feelings were obvious. To be loved by ſuch a character as Manning, was, to her artleſs heart, the higheſt tranſport, and to her unambitious ſoul the trueſt felicity. The words, "Oh! why do we meet but to

love?

love? why love, but to feel torture?" vibrated eternally on her ear. But the air of myſtery with which they were expreſſed perplexed her mind, and ſhe found the pains which alternate hopes and fears produce continually riſing in her breaſt. Serenity vaniſhed, and in its place ſucceeded hopes, wiſhes, doubts, fears, perplexities, and all

"The charming agonies of love, whoſe miſeries delight."

THOMSON.

CHAP. VI.

THE DISCOVERY.

THE calm and placid enjoyment of domeſtic pleaſure was not eaſily reconciled with the high delights to which the morning had been ſo happily devoted. After tea, therefore, Roſina and Lydia walked together to the parade; for Miſs Margaret was too much fatigued to accompany them. The Officers, pleaſed with the ſucceſs their entertainment had received, ſat down to dinner in the higheſt ſpirits. The roſy wine went round

round in unceaſing challenges. The fair divinities they had worſhipped in the morning were now the objects of their idolatry, and their adoration was ſo fervent, that when they viſited the parade they were in a ſtate of exceſſive inebriation.

Roſina, we are ſorry to ſay it, was highly diverted with the rhapſody of nonſenſe which the wine inſpired; but the gentle eyes of Lydia turned from them with diſguſt, in ſearch of an object whom ſhe could not find.

The fine eyes of Melford were ſwimming, not in the ſoft languiſhment of love, but in crazy miſts that almoſt abſorbed his faculties. His hair was quite diſhevelled, the ribbon hanging almoſt off it; the powder was ſcattered in profuſion on his ſhoulders; and he looked like an intoxicated Adonis; but intoxicated with the fumes of a liquor far leſs

delicate than Olympian dew, or nectar from the hands of Venus or her Loves.

He joined the girls; Gods and Goddeſſes were nothing to them in wit and beauty; and he vowed, ranted, ſtammered, complimented, and laughed, until he excited the attention of the whole parade.

Lydia, ſinking with confuſion, and not knowing the dangers to which the impertinence of wild, intoxicated young men might expoſe her, conjured Roſina to return home.

Roſina, diſtreſſed by the ſituation and behaviour of Melford, conſented. She accordingly deſired him to leave her; but he laughed in her face, and refuſed.

Lydia, unable to endure ſuch intemperate behaviour, attempted to leave her ſiſter, and return home by herſelf. Juſt as ſhe was going away, one of the Officers caught hold of her fair hand; and, declaring ſhe

was

was an angel, endeavoured to detain her. Melford interpoſed with ſeeming anger, and reſcuing her from his brother Officer, vowed that ſhe was his angel, whom no one ſhould moleſt, and he led her in triumph from the parade.

Roſina, notwithſtanding all her levity, was ſhocked at theſe tumultuous proceedings; and juſtly dreaded the malevolent obſervations with which they might furniſh the tongue of ſlander.

Lydia, collecting all her ſpirits, commanded Melford to leave their company; but he called her a little prude; ranted a thouſand incoherent expreſſions about cruelty; and placing Roſina's hand under his arm attempted, at the ſame time, to lay hold of her's; but ſhe rejected the proffered aſſiſtance with ſpirited indignation and contempt. The raillery he had exerciſed in

the morning reſpecting her abſence with Manning, had not contributed to raiſe him in her eſteem. If his gratification was to torment her, ſhe thought it the proof of an unfeeling heart. If it proceeded from ignorance of her feelings, it was an inſtance of a light unthinking mind.

Captain Manning, by retiring early from the table, had eſcaped the fate of his brother Officers. Military buſineſs had detained him from the parade; but catching a glance of Roſina and Lydia as they quitted it, the moment he was at liberty he haſtened after them.

Roſina walked by Melford's ſide, laughing and talking with her uſual gaiety and good ſpirits, while he flouriſhed away with the bombaſt of an itinerant player. Lydia followed them in ſilent contemplation. We ſhall not pretend to divine the ſubject of her thoughts;

thoughts; but we fancy ſuggeſtion would not be much miſtaken, by ſuppoſing they were employed about a young hero in regimentals, who had "ſighed and looked unutterable things."

Manning, gently touching her, enquired, what could poſſibly be the ſubject which ſo happily engaged her attention. She ſtarted; but whether it was conſcience, or ſurpriſe, or pleaſure, or all of them conjoined, that vermillioned her cheeks, can only be conjectured; for the great Searcher of hearts alone can reaſon with certainty from cauſes to their effects.

"Oh, Heavens!" ſays ſhe, "is it you? I am rejoiced to ſee you; I have been ſhocked, diſtreſſed, provoked——"

Her ſpirits had undergone conſiderable agitation; and unable to proceed, ſhe burſt into a flood of tears.

Manning ſupported her, and endeavoured to ſooth her feelings. But, in exerciſing the tenderneſs of his heart, his ſoul caught the flame of love, and he exclaimed, "Oh Heavens! how amiable is female ſoftneſs! Nature has made your lovely forms the objects of our fondeſt admiration; but this ſweet auxiliary ſoftens, penetrates, and ſubdues the heart. It is ſenſibility's ſoft charm that captivates the ſoul. But if theſe powers produce ſuch forcible effect on common minds, think, oh think, my Lydia! with what a charm they muſt affect a heart throbbing with ſenſibility—too ſenſible, alas, for its peace, its happineſs, its repoſe!"—A bluſh of pleaſure and confuſion overſpread her cheeks. It was the moſt expreſſive anſwer ſhe could make.

The deepening ſhades of evening cloſed apace; but the obſcurity with which they threatened

threatened to involve the world, was oppoſed by the bright appearance of the moon riſing in ſplendid majeſty from the diſtant horizon. The air was mild and refreſhing; the ſcents of innumerable wild flowers gave fragrance to the brèezes, through which alternately floated the low of cattle, and "the buſy hùm of men" from the village. Lydia wiſhed to prolong the walk; ſhe was deeply in converſation with the man ſhe loved, upon a ſubject the moſt intereſting of all others to the feelings of her heart. Her whole ſoul expanded to the fulneſs of its pleaſures. Her mind approved of the confidence ſhe repoſed in Manning; and ſhe dreaded the idea of their arrival at the Vicarage, which would deſtroy her happineſs by ſeparation.

His words, his looks, were teſtimonies of the moſt ardent paſſion; and, although

an explicit declaration had not yet been made, ſhe was confident of his virtue, and thoroughly perſuaded that his intentions were honourable. Under theſe aſſurances, ſhe did not heſitate to indulge her increaſing paſſion; and the idea of love, even in the loweſt cottage, with ſuch an object as Manning, was magic to her gentle and unaſpiring ſoul.

They, at length, arrived at the Vicarage. Mr. Ouſeley was not returned from his evening walk; and Miſs Margaret had juſt ſtepped out, by her brother's deſire, to adminiſter comfort to the wife of a neighbouring cottager, who was then dangerouſly ill.

Roſina, after having ſat ſome little time in the parlour, ſaid it was extremely warm, and thoughtleſsly ran into the garden to enjoy the evening breeze. Captain Melford followed her, and they ſeated themſelves in the little receſs that has already been mentioned.

tioned. Her ſpirits had been exerted to an uncommon degree during the whole day, and were now beginning to ſink into a ſoft and tender languor.

Alone, and unguarded, with an object too captivating to reſiſt—an object replete with every inſinuating, every beguiling grace, ſhe could not refrain from lending an attentive ear to his warm proteſtations of an ardent, an enthuſiaſtic paſſion, the truth of which he called on Heaven to atteſt.

Unthinking girl! in what a dangerous ſituation had you placed yourſelf.—Oh ye Fair! let not the ſmooth, the varniſhed tongue of adulation, for a moment lull your prudence.

" Nor in the bower,
" Where woodbines flaunt, and roſes ſhed a couch,
" While evening draws her crimſon curtains round,
" Truſt your ſoft minutes with betraying man."

THOMSON.

A youthful

A youthful lover, kneeling at her feet, and calling on her to be the arbitreſs of his fate, might have drawn from her heart the moſt dangerous acknowledgments; but an unexpected object appeared, and ſaved her from the impending peril.

Mr. Ouſeley had been to pay his cottagers an evening viſit. On his return through the garden, the ſound of human voices from the receſs ſtruck his ears.

The time of the evening, and ſomething in the mingled accents which he thought he knew, induced him to approach the place from which they ſeemed to iſſue. He liſtened, and heard a conſiderable part of the converſation. He entered, and, by the light of the moon, diſcovered Melford at his daughter's feet, her hands preſſed to his lips, and her boſom heaving with the moſt tumultuous ſighs.

Shocked

Shocked at the ſight, he ruſhed ſuddenly into the receſs, ſeized her hand, and, without taking any notice of Melford, led her away, half dead with ſhame, and trembling with apprehenſion.

Melford looked very ſilly; and twirling his hat about for a few moments paſſed through the houſe, made a bow to Miſs Margaret, while he made enquiry after his friend Manning, who was gone, and then departed.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

THE PARENTAL ADMONITION.

THE Vicar led Roſina with great ſolemnity to his ſtudy; a place uſually kept ſacred to himſelf, and into which none of the family were permitted to enter except upon extraordinary occaſions. Her heart died within her as ſhe obſerved her father's countenance, and ſhe would have given the world, if ſhe had poſſeſſed it, to have eſcaped the lecture that ſhe ſaw he was prepared to give her.

He

He ſat down upon a couch, and tenderly drawing her to his ſide—" I hope," he began, " that I have enough good ſenſe as well as charity to make liberal allowance for the inexperience of youth, and the giddineſs of unſuſpecting innocence; but I ſhould conſider myſelf as unworthy of the name of parent, if I were to conceal the uneaſineſs your conduct has given me. The diſappointment which I feel in obſerving you loſt to that ſenſe of delicacy which I have ever, with ſo much labour and anxiety, endeavoured to inſtil into your mind, creates a pang that almoſt rives my heart. But I mean not, Roſina, to ſpeak to you with anger or aſperity. I addreſs myſelf to your good ſenſe with the feelings of a parent, and with the partiality of a friend. Reflect, but for one moment, on the danger to which your indiſcretion has expoſed you.

Think

Think of the ſituation in which I found you. Who is this Captain Melford to whom you allow ſuch freedoms? a young man who till very lately was a perfect ſtranger to you; and with whoſe morals, character, or connections, you are, at this inſtant, totally unacquainted; who, from the vile gratification of his idle vanity, may be induced to boaſt, among his libertine companions, of the freedoms you allowed him to take; and in the hours of intoxication and arrogance may, perhaps, invent falſehoods, or exaggerate facts, to the injury of your character, and to your eternal diſcredit. Think, my Roſina, of the opportunity you have given him to ſully the purity of your ſpotleſs reputation; and a woman's reputation once loſt can never be regained; like a blighted flower, its reſtoration is irrecoverable; like ſtars that fall, it ſets to riſe no more. But I will

ſuppoſe

ſuppoſe for a moment that a ſenſe of honour may reſtrain him from making your name the laugh of his licentious companions, the very feelings of delicacy which impoſe the reſtraint, will deſtroy his eſteem for a woman who can ſuffer him to encroach upon the boundaries of propriety and decorum.

"To ſuch a character he may indeed look as the acquaintance of an hour; or he may with juſtice conſider her in a light ſtill more contemptible. But he can never think of her as a wife. Oh, never, never! a very different being would he ſelect for the aſſuager of his cares, and the protector of his honour.

"Your mother, whom few could equal in beauty, was the admiration of all obſervers for her modeſty and good ſenſe. But that lovelineſs, which none could behold without emotion, was, to me, her leaſt perfection;

fection; it was her heaven-born ſoul which gave elegance and dignity to every action.

" Oh Roſina! I hope I have not ſpoken to you with ſternneſs; but what ſhould I have thought of myſelf, if ſeeing the precipice on which you ſtand, I had not cautioned you againſt the dangers of your fall?

" My children are my jewels, my only treaſures. I do not regret the want of thoſe things which Heaven has thought proper to withhold from me: I am thankful for the bleſſings it has beſtowed.

" When it ſhall pleaſe my Creator to call me from the duties of this life, to be ſurrounded by a good and beautiful offspring, as it has been my conſtant prayer, ſo it will form my laſt happineſs. I have endeavoured to teach them true wiſdom; and if I have ſucceeded, I ſhall leave them in the poſſeſſion of treaſures that never fail. Their own

virtues

virtues will then protect them, and enſure them the reſpect of the worthy and the wiſe.

"Come, come, my dear, look cheerful. I ſhall endeavour to forget what is paſt. I ſhall lay but one injunction upon you; and that is, I muſt abſolutely inſiſt on your dropping all intimacy whatever with Captain Melford. The military profeſſion is both uſeful and honourable; but it is, in general, a life of diſſipation and extravagance; and the members of it acquire, by continued pleaſure, a diſſolute and unreſtrained ſtyle of manners, which renders them unfit companions for the daughters of an humble Vicar. Their intentions are always ambitious; but you, like your father, muſt learn to reſtrain your wiſhes to the limited ſphere in which Providence has ordained you ſhould act."

With

With this obſervation Mr. Ouſeley concluded his affectionate lecture, and Roſina left the room.

CHAP. VIII.

A RECRIMINATION.

THE diſpleaſure of a fond parent made, for a moment, a deep impreſſion upon Roſina's mind. Some parts of her father's admonition had ſeverely wounded her pride; and the idea of being obliged to raiſe the

ſiege

ſiege ſhe had ſo ſucceſsfully carried on againſt Melford's heart, on the eve of an expected capitulation, was inſupportable. Sorrow, vexation, and diſmay at once racked every nerve, and tore her heart. She retired to her room, and throwing herſelf upon the bed, burſt into a flood of conſolatory tears.

Lydia, anxious to learn what had paſſed that could poſſibly produce ſuch diſtreſs, followed Roſina into the room. Roſina, when the torrent of her affliction had ſomewhat ſubſided, began to tell her ſtory of the tranſaction; and it will eaſily be conceived, that from the ingenious manner in which it was natural for her to gloſs it over, there appeared to be not much to blame in it. Lydia, however, who ſuſpected that ſhe had given a very ſpecious plauſibility to the relation, ſhook her head as her ſiſter concluded, and made no reply.

Roſina

Roſina underſtood the meaning of her ſilence, and was offended at it. "Lord, Lydia," ſhe cried, "you are always ſo very prudent! but grave people are ſly enough ſometimes. You may cenſure me if you pleaſe; but I am ſure I have often ſeen Captain Manning as familiar with you as ever Captain Melford has been with me. This very evening I ſaw him preſs your hand to his boſom all the way we walked home."

Lydia was unable to deny the truth of this aſſertion; the bluſhes upon her cheeks gave evidence againſt her, and condemned her to a flood of tears.

"Nay, nay, my dear Lydia," continued Roſina, diſtreſſed by the pain ſhe had given, "how can you mind what I ſay when I am vexed? I know that I am too giddy. Don't cry.—If you had told me you had ſeen

thouſands kiſs and preſs my hands, you know I ſhould not have thought any thing about it. Papa lives ſo ſecluded from the world, that the leaſt trifling thing affects and frightens him; and he would keep us as cloſely confined as a Lady Abbeſs keeps her Nuns."

The entrance of Miſs Margaret interrupted their converſation. She had juſt procured a new publication, which ſhe promiſed to read to them. After the Vicar was gone to bed, they went accordingly to her chamber, and ſhe read to them for a conſiderable time. Roſina in the meantime altered a cap, and meditated a variety of conqueſts by the different forms in which ſhe placed it. Lydia cut a landſcape from paper, and wiſhed in reality for ſuch a cottage, with the object of her heart, as ſhe had modelled.

CHAP. IX.

A NEW CHARACTER.

ROSINA went down to breakfaſt the enſuing morning with a determination to appear very ſilent and very penſive; but the unexpected ſight of Mr. Sedgeley reanimated her ſpirits, and ſet this reſolve at nought.

Sedgeley was a young Curate, the eldeſt ſon of a wealthy farmer in the neighbourhood, whoſe pride and affection were highly gratified

gratified by the virtues and accompliſhments of his child.

The character of young Sedgeley was compounded of wiſdom and ſimplicity. Nature had given him a tolerable ſhare of underſtanding, which he had conſiderably improved by an intenſe application to the ſtudy of books; but his total ignorance of the manners of the world, and a ſlight tincture of pedantry, obſcured his knowledge, and rendered his learning uſeleſs. His taſte in poetry was claſſical and correct; but it had given a romantic turn to his ſentiments, not very correſpondent with the uſual formality of his behaviour.

Refined love, pure honour, unſhaken friendſhip, were exhauſtleſs themes to him; and as he was unacquainted with the depravities of mankind, he was ever eager to diſplay the virtues of human nature. Guilt-

leſs in his principles, fervent in the performance of his duty, and artleſs in converſation, he acquired, upon continued acquaintance, the univerſal eſteem of the worthy.

He had profeſſed a moſt ardent *tendre* for Roſina. Her name was carved on trees ten miles round the country; and innumerable were the ſonnets which he had written upon her merits.

Old Sedgeley could give his ſon a very tolerable fortune. Mr. Ouſeley, therefore, had no objection to the match; but he never would conſtrain the inclinations of his children.

Roſina coquetted with him with the moſt perfect indifference; and her only motive for ſeeming to afford him encouragement, was the dear delight of retaining him as one among the number of her votaries, and

to

to prevent him from becoming the choice of any other.

His figure was not unpleaſing, the bloom of health and exerciſe enlivened his features. Fine dark brown hair gave a penſive elegance to his countenance; but theſe luxuriant locks which flowed negligently on his ſhoulders, have frequently been twiſted by the miſchievous fingers of Roſina into a queue, until Lydia apprized him of her ſiſter's employment. He deteſted novels; and having confuted ſome of the moſt favourite of Miſs Margaret's philoſophic truths, he was not very much in her eſteem.

Roſina, during the breakfaſt, took a ſly peep at the glaſs, and told him ſhe had been dying to ſee him.

"So, Madam," ſaid he, ſipping his tea, "you had a fine ball yeſterday! I am told

that all was in the true ſtyle of Arcadian elegance."

"Faugh! Arcadia is ever in your mouth, Mr. Sedgeley," cried Miſs Margaret. "It is a great pity that you did not live in Arcadia; you would have made an admirable figure in the midſt of a flock of ſheep, with a ſqueaking pipe in your mouth, and crooked ſtaff in your hand."

"There is no neceſſity, Madam," replied Sedgeley, "to recur to ſo diſtant an era or the pleaſures of paſtoral life. A mind in the habit of contemplating pleaſing objects with that pure, ingenuous elegance of ſoul which Thomſon has deſcribed, will, in this age, ſoon cultivate a fondneſs for thoſe divine pictures of the pure ſimplicity of nature, which the poets have ſo finely painted."

"Our

"Our ball," ſaid Roſina, for that was the prevailing ſubject of her thoughts, "was delightful."

"It is the remark," anſwered Sedgeley, "of ſome celebrated author, that the military give peculiar charms to every place, in the eyes of the ladies."

"Aye, and he ſpoke truly," interrupted Miſs Margaret. She then expatiated, with extravagant verboſity, on the excellence of military characters; dignified them with all the honourable epithets which her extenſive vocabulary contained; and pointedly remarked upon the folly of thoſe unreaſonable prejudices, which people, who had not mixed much in the world, too frequently entertained againſt the honourable profeſſion.

The tendency of her comments were too obvious and too important to eſcape the attention of Mr. Ouſeley; and, rather than

ſuffer them to weaken the effect of any part of his recent admonition to Roſina, he artfully drew his ſiſter into a full inveſtigation of the ſubject, and entirely confuted every argument which ſhe urged in ſupport of her opinions. This unexpected defeat in the midſt of triumph, provoked her indignation beyond controul, and ſhe exclaimed in a rage, "Brother, brother, your ſentiments aſtoniſh me. Do you forget that ſome of your nobleſt anceſtors were military men? Do you forget your deſcent from the illuſtrious Douglas? do you forget that your ſecond-couſin, Jamie Wallace, was killed at Bunker's Hill? recollect your nameſake, who was blown up in a fortreſs. Are the achievements of ancient heroes to be forgot? the unſhaken fortitude of Hannibal! the matchleſs clemency of Ceſar! the glorious death of Wolfe! are theſe exploits nothing

in

in your imagination? do they not warm your mind? ſhould they not fire your ſpirit? That the military, the bulwark of the nation, the guardians of our property, the protectors of our virtue, ſhould be thus abuſed—provoking!—— Was I a man, I would carry a muſket; and, if I had a daughter, I would ſooner give her to a recruiting ſerjeant, than to any ſneaking private gentleman; or to any inſignificant Curate, with a parcel of homilies in his pocket, and a rhapſody of poetical nonſenſe in his brains."

This laſt ſtroke was levelled, with ſome ſucceſs, at young Sedgeley, who bluſhed violently, twirled his cup upon the ſaucer, and endeavoured to avoid looking extremely ſilly. Roſina enjoyed his confuſion for ſome minutes; and then, in order to afford her aunt a new ſubject of declamation againſt

him, and to give effect to a joke which ſhe had been contriving, ſhe very ſeriouſly aſked him if he was yet reconciled to the reading of novels? to which, with a ſignificant ſhake of his head, he anſwered in the negative.

"Oh! I ſuppoſe you think," exclaimed Miſs Margaret, "that you are too wiſe; but let me tell you, the moſt ſenſible people don't diſdain to peruſe them; and let me alſo aſſure you, that thoſe who are ignorant of fine proſe, can never be good judges of elegant poetry. If indeed your ſtudies had been devoted, as mine have been, to Milton, Pope, Young, Thomſon, Goldſmith, Akenſide"——

"The works of thoſe celebrated writers, Madam," ſaid Sedgeley, modeſtly, "chiefly furniſh my library; but the entertainment which they afford, is, in opinion, very different

ferent from that which is derived from the reading of novels."

"Pray, Sir," interpoſed Roſina, "what are your objections to novels?"

"The books, Madam, which are in general comprehended under the deſcription of novels," anſwered Sedgeley, "are ſeldom written with any judgment; they fire the fancy without improving the heart; they amuſe the mind, but give no information to the underſtanding; they promote vice by miſrepreſenting virtue."

While Sedgeley was declaiming againſt the pernicious effects of novels, Miſs Ouſeley obſerved a book ſticking half-way out of his pocket, and interrupting him, ſaid, "I ſuppoſe, Sir, this is one of your admired authors."

"This, Madam!" replied Sedgeley, ſtammering, and colouring violently; "no

Ma'am, I can't ſay that it is an author that I—I—"

His embarraſſment excited her curioſity, and ſhe determined to ſee what book it was. Extending her hand, therefore, ſhe drew it from his pocket, and opening the title page, read aloud, "The Fatal Miſtake, or the Errors of the Heart." "So, Sir," ſaid ſhe, with an air of triumph, "you hate, you deteſt, you never read novels; they fire the fancy, and corrupt the heart."

No words can deſcribe the confuſion that appeared in the countenance of the aſtoniſhed Curate. "The Fatal Miſtake!" he exclaimed, in a tone of amazement. "As I live, that was not the book which I had in my pocket when I came from home."

As Sedgeley pronounced this aſſeveration, the Vicar raiſed his eyes towards him with a look of arch incredulity; but, happening

to

to glance them on Roſina, as they paſſed along, he perceived a ſly ſmile playing round her features, which convinced him that it was in her power to ſolve the myſtery. Roſina, burſting into an immoderate fit of laughter, produced a book which ſhe had dexterouſly taken from Sedgeley's pocket, during his argument with her aunt, and for which ſhe had ſubſtituted one of her own. Miſs Margaret, in the heat of curioſity, caught it haſtily from Roſina's hand, and opened it with perfect confidence of a new triumph over Sedgeley. But how great was her diſappointment and mortification when, inſtead of a novel, ſhe diſcovered it to be an eſſay on—Old Maids!

"Really, Mr. Sedgeley," ſaid Miſs Margaret, "I did not imagine that you had ſo much hypocriſy. You affect to deſpiſe a harmleſs novel, and yet you can walk about

about with a book like this in your pocket; a book written for the purpoſe of expoſing to ridicule a whole claſs of individuals: I have no patience with you!"

"Nay, ſiſter," obſerved Mr. Ouſeley, drily, "don't unintentionally condemn your favourite author Smollet. Recollect what pretty ſpecimens he has given us of Old Maids, in the characters of Mrs. Grizzle and Miſs Tabitha Bramble."

This unexpected diſappointment very much nettled the ſweetneſs of Miſs Margaret's temper; but recollecting that the more ſhe ſtormed againſt a ſatire upon old maids, the more ſhe included herſelf within the ſtigma of the character, ſhe ſuffered her anger to evaporate in a fume of ſubacid raillery againſt the Vicar and the Curate. The Curate, however, purchaſed an entire forgiveneſs by preſenting to the whole family

a ſet

a ſet of tickets for a play, which a ſtrolling party was that night to perform near the village, in a barn belonging to his father. The preſent indeed was probably made at no great expence to him, as his father was the Juſtice of the Peace who had granted them permiſſion to act. Mr. Ouſeley, ever pleaſed with an opportunity of rendering thoſe about him happy, accepted the tickets; and Mr. Sedgeley was invited to dinner, that he might introduce the family with all the pomp which was ſuppoſed to belong to the eldeſt ſon of the licenſing Magiſtrate.

Roſina's ſpirits were immediately elevated by the proſpect of an amuſement which afforded her the chance of ſeeing Melford; but her pleaſure was in ſome meaſure abated by the recollection that the company of her father would preclude the poſſibility of any converſation paſſing between them.

CHAP.

CHAP X.

THE TETE-A-TETE.

CAPTAIN MELFORD had been extremely diſconcerted by the unexpected appearance of Mr. Ouſeley during his interview with Roſina in the arbour of the garden. The enſuing morning, while he was at breakfaſt, his friend Manning entered his apartment.

"How, in the name of wonder, Melford," cried he, "could you torment the girls in the

the manner you did laſt night? you muſt have known that you were in a very improper ſtate to be their companion."

"My dear fellow," anſwered Melford, "you were certainly deſigned as the Cenſor-General of the age. Do you ſuppoſe that they had any objection to me for being a little whimſical? on the contrary, that little wild Roſina ſaid I ſhould be always ſo, for that I was never half ſo agreeable."

"As you have choſen to mention the name of Roſina," ſaid Manning, "let me ſeriouſly aſk you, Melford, what are your intentions relative to that girl? I now perceive, through all her giddineſs, that ſhe entertains a particular partiality for you. Her ſprightly eyes, at the ſight of you, glow with increaſing luſtre. Her cheeks crimſon with a brighter bluſh when you approach; and when you ſpeak, her ſnowy boſom,

boſom, heaving with unuſual throbs, indicates the tumults of her heart. You muſt have flattered her hopes with the idea of a ſerious attachment. I know you are no trifler; you would not ſeek a conqueſt for the mere gratification of obtaining it; and therefore you muſt, one way or the other, have a deſign; but of what nature that deſign is you can beſt determine."

"Pſhaw, nonſenſe," cried Melford, "you are always ſo intolerably grave. I don't know what you mean."

"Oh! you cannot miſtake my meaning," replied Manning, "I ſpeak to you with the openneſs, the ſincerity, the affection of a friend; and I conjure you, if your deſigns upon Roſina be not honourable, to decline all future attentions towards her. The paſſion ſhe has now imbibed may, perhaps, be conquered; but if you increaſe it, you may render

render her, in any event but matrimony, completely wretched."

"Wretched!" exclaimed Melford, with a ſmile, "no, no, take my word for it, there is no danger of her being wretched; ſhe has not ſufficient ſenſibility."

"Pardon me," cried Manning, "if I aſſert that I think ſhe has. Were we to analyſe the feelings of her mind, warped as it now appears to be by levity and wildneſs, there would be found a degree of ſenſibility, which diſappointed love, or the ſcorn of the world, would torture almoſt to madneſs."

"The generous friendſhip," exclaimed Melford, "which has, from the firſt moment of our acquaintance, inviolably ſubſiſted between us, has been, I candidly acknowledge, the greateſt felicity of my life; and I flatter myſelf that it has been mutually

ardent

ardent and ſincere. Shall I then, Manning, open to you upon this ſubject the inmoſt receſſes of my ſoul, ſubmit my whole heart to your inſpection, and let you read my moſt ſecret thoughts?—no, I feel I cannot, I acknowledge it is a ſcrutiny which I could not ſupport. I ſhall not, however, entirely conceal my feelings from my friend. Roſina has, I confeſs, more of that kind of beauty and ſpirit which peculiarly pleaſes my taſte, than any woman I ever knew; and ſhe has, conſequently, received a greater ſhare of my attention. That ſhe is a coquette you know; and as ſhe has been brought up far from the metropolis, it is fair to conclude that this diſpoſition is rather the indelible ſtamp of nature than the temporary effect of imitation. My temper, you know, is haughty, my views ambitious, my expectations ſanguine, and I own that I look to a

rank

rank in life much more exalted than Roſina's to form an attachment in. Should her love, however, if you will have it that ſhe loves me, tempt me to prefer her charms to the charms of ambition, what proſpect of happineſs could I reaſonably expect from ſuch a character? in forming an alliance with her, all my pleaſing proſpects of future greatneſs would in a moment vaniſh, and I muſt learn to bear the loſs of faſhionable acquaintances, and to endure with patience the reproachful ſneers of the world. In return for thoſe ſacrifices, I ſhould expect, on her part, the moſt ſoothing gentleneſs, the moſt unremitting attention, the pureſt and the warmeſt affection ſhe could beſtow; for theſe alone could ſatisfy the feelings of diſappointed pride, or blunt the ſting of pointed ridicule. But inſtead of theſe pleaſures, intoxicated by her natural deſire for admiration, as ſhe

grew

grew more intimate with the world, ſhe would grow more rapacious for its praiſe. My domeſtic peace would be broken by the caprices of a flirt, by the petulance of diſappointed vanity, or by the flighty conduct of flattered beauty. My private hours would be diſturbed by a crowd of fools and coxcombs, to whom ſhe would diſpenſe the attentions which I ſhould think belonged excluſively to me. Believing her as I do to be a finiſhed coquette, I ſhould be eternally ſuſpicious; and the canker of diſtruſt would be continually preying upon the ſympathies of love. I ſhould think that ſhe was perpetually dancing on the verge of a precipice; and that one thoughtleſs moment might plunge her into an abyſs of infamy, and draw me after as a partner in her diſgrace. Diſappointed of the tenderneſs and attention which I ſhould expect, loſt to my preſent

nopes and future expectations, I ſhould be tempted to rail againſt the hour in which I united my fate with her's. She poſſeſſes, I acknowledge, beauty and ſenſe enough to conquer thouſands; but ſhe wants ſteadineſs and propriety to retain any of her admirers in honourable thraldom. Had ſhe, with her bewitching flow of ſpirits, a portion of her ſiſter's gentleneſs, I will not ſay what madneſs I might not have been induced, by her beauty and partiality, to commit. But wild as I am, my dear Manning, I can never think of ſuch a being for the preſerver of my honour; and while I conſider her character in this light, it follows that Roſina Ouſeley can never, oh never! be the wife of Melford."

"You ſeem to think that a connection with the Vicar's family would debaſe your rank. But by all that is juſt," cried Manning,

ning, "Lydia Ouſeley is a young woman who, mild, virtuous, and attractive, would, in my eſtimation, reflect dignity on any ſtation. Rank might place her merit in a more conſpicuous light; but rank could never increaſe her worth, or render her more pure and charming."

"Hold, hold theſe extraordinary commendations," cried Melford, "or I ſhall abſolutely form ſome ſtrange opinion of your deſigns. Surely, Manning, you forget that you are already under a ſolemn engagement of matrimony! but, perhaps, you imagine, what is certainly very true, that ſuch a girl as Lydia would contribute to raiſe your ſpirits after a dull matrimonial *tête-à-tête*.—Open your ſchemes to me, Manning, and command my ſervices; a file of muſketeers or a——"

"If

"If I could entertain a thought," interrupted Manning with warmth, "injurious to ſuch ſpotleſs purity, I ſhould conſider myſelf the moſt profligate, the moſt abandoned of my ſex, unfit to exiſt in human ſociety, and formed alone for unfrequented deſerts, and the company of brutes. You ſay Roſina Ouſeley can never be your wife; I hope then you mean to decline all future correſpondence with her. It would be cruel, nay barbarous, Melford, to trifle with the peace, and, perhaps, the reputation of a girl who loves you. Conſider how it would wring the heart of her fond old parent with anguiſh, and deſtroy, perhaps for ever, the ſerenity of her lovely ſiſter's mind; for on the happineſs of Roſina, I know, the felicity of Lydia materially depends—Of diſhonourable views I cannot, no," cried

he, fixing his eyes ſtedfaſtly on Melford, "I will not ſuſpect you."

"Manning," replied Melford, in rather a peremptory tone, "I candidly told you that I could not bear too ſevere a ſcrutiny. Act as you pleaſe with regard to Lydia, but leave Roſina to me."

"Act as I pleaſe with regard to Lydia!" repeated Manning, evidently hurt at what Melford had ſaid; "I ſhall act with honour." But he felt that his feelings were carrying him beyond the bounds of prudence; he endeavoured, therefore, to ſuppreſs them; and, after ſome heſitation, informed Melford that he intended to ſet out for London early the next morning.

"For London early in the morning!" exclaimed Melford, "when the regiment is to quit theſe quarters ſo ſoon?"

"I am

" I am ſummoned there upon indiſpenſable buſineſs, which requires my immediate preſence," anſwered Manning with a ſigh.

" Ah Manning, Manning!" replied Melford, " neither of us, I fancy, are quite ſo wiſe as we imagined."—He then rang the bell for the ſervant to dreſs his hair, and the *tête-à-tête* ended.

CHAP. XI.

THE PLAY.

SEDGELEY came to the Vicarage to dinner at the hour appointed, and brought with him a beautiful *bouquet*, compoſed of every flower the ſeaſon produced, which he divided between the ladies; partially reſerving the ſweeteſt flowers for Roſina, as a ſilent teſtimony of his affection.

Roſina never looked more beautiful than ſhe did at preſent. Her dreſs was in a ſtyle of the moſt becoming ſimplicity. A white dimity robe, ornamented with dark green ribbons,

ribbons, added elegance to her ſhape; a thin muſlin cap adorned her head with rural neatneſs; her hair, curled in the negligence of nature, hung round her forehead; and in her boſom ſhe wore Sedgeley's *bouquet* of bloſſomed myrtle and roſe buds—balmy, ſweet and beauteous as her lips. The recent vexation ſhe had felt gave a more delicate tincture to her complexion, and new irreſiſtibility ſparkled from her eyes. The appearance of Lydia was equally lovely, though leſs brilliant.

The tea was ordered at an earlier hour than uſual, and, after it was over, the party repaired to the theatric barn; where a crowded audience were already aſſembled. Among the company were the Officers of the regiment; and amongſt the Officers were thoſe who had diſtinguiſhed themſelves

ſelves by their attentions to the Vicar's daughters.

The eyes of Roſina ſoon caught thoſe of Melford. Reſolved, if poſſible, to torment him, ſhe opened a ſmart flirtation with her companion Sedgeley, every now and then glancing her eyes at Melford to obſerve its effect. Melford appeared thoughtful, penſive, and uneaſy, the whole evening. The morning converſation with Manning had diſturbed his mind; and his looks always correſponded with the feelings of his heart. In real love there is a ſympathy which ſilently participates in all the concerns of the object beloved; and the diſquietude which ſat pictured in Melford's countenance ſoon communicated itſelf to the boſom of Roſina. She attributed his uneaſineſs to the circumſtances which had debarred him from the pleaſures of her converſation; and when ſhe

ſtood

ſtood up ſhe turned toward him, and gave him a look ſo inexpreſſibly ſweet, as forth at night at leaſt, deprived him of his reſt.

'The play was Venice Preſerved; but no other plot was diſcovered than that which the performers carried on againſt the ſenſe, ſpirit, and meaning of the poet. The tender muſe of Otway called in vain upon Melpomene to defend her favourite offspring from the rude attack. But Thalia invaded her domain, and, heading the conſpirators, produced a roar of laughter throughout the evening.

The entertainments of the evening being over, Sedgeley eſcorted the ladies back to the Vicarage. The two ſiſters were in very bad ſpirits; but Miſs Margaret talked away upon the declenſion of dramatic merit, and paid a tributary ſigh to the revered memory of Cibber, Pritchard, Garrick, and Powell.

CHAP. XII.

THE DANGERS OF LOVE.

THE next morning, while the ladies were at breakfaſt, the Vicar entered the room, and informed his daughters, that the injunction he had laid upon them, not to viſit the parade while the Officers were in the town, would ſoon be at an end; for he had juſt received intelligence that the regiment had orders to march in a few days.

The

The feelings of Roſina were terribly ſhocked at this unexpected information. Carreſſed, flattered, and, as ſhe conceived, adored by Melford, ſhe had built a manſion of eternal happineſs on the ground of hope which now ſeemed to vaniſh from her view like the tranſient pleaſures of a dream. The minutes flew with unuſual rapidity; and increaſing diſquietude tormented her heart as the moment of Melford's departure approached. To part without even an adieu; without affording him an opportunity to ſay—but, in ſhort, ſhe knew not what ſhe would have him ſay to calm her agitations. She thought, however, that the interdiction of her father was unneceſſary and ſevere.

Ah, Roſina! how little qualified were you to judge, like that parent, with diſcernment of mankind. Deceived by ſelf-love, the moſt dexterous and deluſive paſſion of

the human mind, you had indulged a thouſand flattering hopes, which the romantic warmth of youth too fondly perſuaded you were ripening to perfection.

There was a poor woman that ſold ribbons and other gewgaws about the village, who came frequently to the Vicarage, where the girls always received her kindly, and liſtened with pleaſure to the arch ſimplicity with which ſhe told unnumbered tales. This creature repaired to the houſe one afternoon, and, pretending to have a great deal to relate, took the opportunity, while Lydia was examining ſome ribbons, to ſlip a note into Roſina's hand; making at the ſame time a ſign of ſecrecy.

Roſina trembled as ſhe received it; and gueſſing from whom it came, was ſo confuſed, that her agitation nearly diſcovered the ſecret which the ſign had inſtructed her

to

to conceal. She retired immediately to her chamber; and breaking the wax, found it was, as her fancy had already ſuggeſted to her, a letter from Captain Melford.

It contained a very few lines, entreating her to meet him that evening, if but for *two moments*, at the ſkirt of the grove, as the regiment was to march from Lanſdowne early the next morning, and he could not ſupport the idea of parting without bidding her adieu, and diſcloſing to her the feelings of his heart.

The immediate impulſes of love and tenderneſs left no opportunity for reflection to interpoſe. She called to Suſan to come up ſtairs; and charging her to make ſome excuſe for her abſence, in caſe it ſhould be diſcovered, ſlipped, unobſerved, from the houſe, and hurried directly to the place of aſſignation.

Melford, who well knew that ſhe would ſurmount every difficulty, if poſſible, to meet him, was already there, and received her with all the open tranſport of undiſſembled paſſion. A perfect maſter in the art of love, endowed by nature with every beguiling grace, he taught his features their moſt enſnaring powers. His voice aſſumed a ſoft and plaintive tone, finely adapted to the tender feelings he wiſhed to inſpire, and he ſoon diſcovered the effect which it produced in the boſom of Roſina.

Some heavy ſhowers of rain had lately fallen, and the graſs was extremely wet; he therefore prevailed on her to retire to a little ſeat, which was ſheltered from the damp, by a cloſely entwined covering of hawthorn. Here he ſeated himſelf by her ſide, and lamenting the cruelty of their approaching ſeparation, painted to her the

ſufferings

ſufferings of his heart in ſuch warm and glowing language, that he nearly drew from the too credulous, and almoſt fainting Roſina, a declaration of her paſſion. Obſerving the aſcendancy he had gained, he threw himſelf at her feet, and looked at her, for a few minutes, with all the ſpeechleſs eloquence of love. A ſudden agony burſt from him. "Oh, Roſina!" he exclaimed, "can I bear to leave you? cruel Roſina! how can you behold the man who adores you lying miſerable at your feet, without wiſhing to relieve him?"

"What do you mean?" cried Roſina, aſtoniſhed.

Again he gazed on her with dangerous ſoftneſs: a ſort of frantic fondneſs followed; another agony burſt from him. He ſeized her hand with tranſport, and talked with rapture of unhallowed joys.

Oh,

Oh, Melford! how at that moment didſt thou degrade thy noble character! how darken all the native brightneſs of thy ſoul! profaning the ſacred name of love, aſſailing the ears of virtue, and ſeeking to plunge the unſuſpecting child of innocence into irretrievable guilt!

He urged his ignominious paſſion with all the confidence of an unfeeling libertine, and with the dexterous, intricate, and diſguiſed ſophiſtry of frontleſs vice. Deep, ſubtle, argumentative, and impaſſioned, he concealed the baſeneſs of his deſign under a veil ſo ſpecious and ſeductive, that a mind leſs ſtrictly virtuous than Roſina's might have fallen a victim to his arts. But although her giddineſs and vanity had driven her to the extremeſt verge of indiſcretion, her mind had never harboured an idea repugnant to the faireſt purity.

She

She doubted at firſt the evidence of her ſenſes; but when he again preſſed his licentious eloquence on her ear, ſhe ſtarted up, and, wringing her hands in unutterable agony, attempted to paſs him. "Let me go, let me go," ſhe cried, with a diſordered air: "you have uſed me baſely. Oh! you have trampled on the bounds, the ſacred bounds of honour, generoſity, hoſpitality, and virtue! you have ſought to bring a harmleſs, fond old man with ſorrow to his grave. Could I have thought it poſſible? oh no! of Virtue herſelf I entertained not a higher opinion than of Melford. Oh Melford!" cried ſhe, with a burſt of ſorrow, "how have you deceived me? you have violated the confidence I repoſed in you. You have—"

Melford laid hold of her gown, and endeavoured to ſpeak.

"Detain

"Detain me no longer, Sir," ſhe exclaimed with indignation. "Dare no longer to inſult me. The unnerved hand of an aged parent ſhall become powerful to chaſtiſe your inſolence; and I have a brother whoſe youthful arm ſhall make you deeply rue the injury you have meditated on his ſiſter's innocence. Detain me no longer," ſhe cried aloud, with increaſing fury; "my brain already maddens. Let me go, if you do not wiſh to ſee me the ſenſeleſs victim of your barbarity."

There was a wild phrenzy in her air as ſhe pronounced theſe words, which ſuſpended all the faculties of his ſoul. His hands abandoned their hold. She fled from him with precipitation, and vaniſhed in a moment from his ſight. He ſtood for ſome time fixed in ſenſeleſs aſtoniſhment; but recollection at laſt returned. Her image preſented

preſented itſelf to his mind. The ſtart of horror which ſhe gave when he firſt diſcloſed his baſe intent; the emotions of regret, diſappointment, abhorrence, and indignation, which ſucceſſively aroſe in her heart, demonſtrated the integrity of her principles, and bitterly reproached him for the inſult he had offered to the ſhrine of purity; for the wounds he had given to the heart that loved him.

Never did ſhe appear to his view more conqueringly lovely than at the moment when her virtue roſe triumphant over his endeavours to ſeduce it. Sentiments which he had never felt before, took ſtrong poſſeſſion of his mind. Conſcience regained her empire in his breaſt; the baſeneſs and depravity of his conduct tortured his feelings, ſmote his heart with the keeneſt pangs of guilt, and, in ſome meaſure, avenged the cauſe of injured virtue. He ſtood appalled and

ſelf-convicted of premeditated villainy; penitence could ſuggeſt no mode of expiation equal to the enormity of his crime. He would have laid his ambition willingly at her feet; but, amidſt the turbulence of his mind, the ſtern paſſion of pride interpoſed, and relieved his diſtreſs. While he alternately ſuggeſted and diſapproved a thouſand ſchemes by which he might hope to obtain forgiveneſs, he recollected the denunciation ſhe had made againſt him of her brother's vengeance. His haughty ſoul caught fire at the idea of compulſive retribution, and all his notions of voluntary atonement expired in its flames. The acceſſion of oppoſite paſſions, however, contributed to increaſe the torture of his mind, and he returned to his ſolitary quarters in excruciating anguiſh. Manning was gone to London; and he had no friend near him into

whoſe

whoſe conſolatory boſom he could unload the accumulating ſorrows of his heart; the moſt refined and implacable vengeance could not, perhaps, have deviſed a ſpecies of puniſhment more grievous and ſevere.

Lydia had obſerved her ſiſter's abſence, and entertained ſome unſettled notion of the cauſe of it. She was apprehenſive leſt her father's early return from his evening walk ſhould diſcover it. Roſina, however, fortunately arrived at the Vicarage before her father returned. She entered the door pale, trembling, and diſordered; and, tottering up ſtairs to her chamber, ſunk faint and breathleſs into a chair.

Lydia, who had been watchful for her return, immediately followed her. "What is the matter, Roſina?" ſaid ſhe, in a tone of terror. "Gracious Heaven! what can have happened?"

"Aſk

"Aſk me not! oh, ſpeak not to me, Lydia!" cried the agitated Roſina. "Leave me, leave me, oh, leave me to myſelf!"

"I conjure you," replied Lydia, trembling with apprehenſion, "I conjure you, Roſina, to tell me the cauſe of your diſtreſs."

"Seek not to know the cauſe of my diſtreſs," replied Roſina; "it is enough to ſay, that I am the moſt unhappy wretch alive. Oh, that death would eaſe me of my pain!"

"Oh Heaven, Roſina!" exclaimed Lydia, with alarm. "Pray explain yourſelf. What have I done to forfeit your eſteem? I am your ſiſter, your friend, oh, hide not your ſorrows from me! repoſe them with confidence in my boſom, and be aſſured——"

"Melford is a villain," interrupted Roſina, ſobbing in a flood of tears. Lydia looked

looked aghaſt, and breathed in ſilence—" ſo I always thought."

" Ah, Lydia, Lydia! how differently do we think of thoſe we love!" replied Roſina. " But do not imagine that I am the betrayed creature you ſeem to think me. I have been imprudent, but, Heaven be praiſed, I am ſtill innocent; my ſoul ſtarted with deteſtation from his propoſal. Oh, he has cruelly deceived me! he has torn open the tendereſt receſſes of my heart; his treachery, however, may be of ſervice; he has opened my eyes to the duplicity of the world; he has taught me a leſſon of caution and diſtruſt; he has, Lydia, yes, my dear ſiſter, he has taught me to bluſh for my paſt indiſcretion, and made me reſolve never more to yield a willing ear to the deceitful tongue of flattery and adulation."

" Gracious

"Gracious Providence! I thank thee," cried Lydia, raiſing her lovely eyes to heaven. "Thou haſt preſerved my ſiſter from a villain's wiles, the grey hairs of a parent from ſorrow, and my heart from breaking."

Roſina, when the agitation of her ſpirits were compoſed, gave a faithful narrative to her ſiſter of every word that had paſſed, and of every incident which had ever happened between her and Melford, from his firſt acquaintance to the preſent time.

The mind of Lydia was intereſtedly attentive to every ſentence of Roſina's narrative; and her emotions evidently diſcovered that her heart was labouring with a ſecret which her tongue would be unable to conceal. "Is it poſſible," ſhe exclaimed, as her ſiſter concluded, "that two characters ſo extremely different as Captain Manning and

and Captain Melford, can really entertain the warm and cordial friendſhip for each other which they mutually profeſs? Oh Roſina! liſten to me while I diſcloſe the particulars of an event which fills my breaſt with mingled pain and pleaſure. I might now have been weeping with anguiſh over the diſappointed wiſhes of a deluded heart, but that Manning is the moſt generous of mankind. Honour holds her ſacred throne within his breaſt; and Virtue is the arbiter of all his actions; he perceived the power which his merits have ſilently gained in my affections; but, diſdaining to take an advantage of my weakneſs, he has generouſly cautioned me, with the warmth of a lover, and with the ſincerity of a friend, to repreſs the progreſs of a paſſion which particular circumſtances, he ſays, muſt inevitably render hopeleſs. You may remember that after

we

we came home, on the evening when we were driven from the parade by the intoxication of the Officers, I was left alone with Manning in the parlour. The recollection of ſome expreſſions which he had made to me during the entertainments of the morning had agitated my ſpirits to a great degree, and the opportunity of privacy induced him to reſume the ſubject. My feelings were excited beyond my ſtrength, and I fainted away. I remained for ſome moments ſenſeleſs; but when I recovered, I found Manning, the generous Manning, leaning over me with anxious ſolicitude. After a momentary ſilence, he exclaimed, 'Oh Lydia! I cannot deſcribe the concern which your illneſs has given me. I have watched returning life with anxious expectation. Oh that I could watch for ever over you with guardian care! But, alas! the fates will not

permit

permit me to indulge that pleaſing hope. I am no ſtranger, Lydia, to the ſituation of your heart, and I cannot reſt any longer without coming to an eclairciſſement. I admire, I love, I adore you; you are the friend of my heart, and the pride of my affections; never did I behold you without emotion. Your beauty firſt gained dominion over my mind, and your ineſtimable virtues have eſtabliſhed your ſovereignty in my heart. A cruel fate, alas! forbids me to indulge a hopeleſs paſſion, or I ſhould long ere now have made my feelings known, and have endeavoured, by every honourable expedient, to unite your deſtiny with mine. A matrimonial engagement which I am under, and which honour binds me to conſider as ſacred, as indiſſoluble, as if the nuptial ceremony had already paſſed, tears me from the object of my wiſhes. But

abſence cannot efface your image from my mind; you will be ever preſent to my view, and I fear that wretchedneſs is my inevitable doom. The trial is ſevere, oh! teach me, thou fair and gentle being, the virtues of patience, mildneſs, and reſignation; teach me to rely upon that Power who alone can ſoften my ſorrows, and calm my agitated mind.'—My tears ſtreamed down my cheeks —'Ah Lydia!' continued he, 'what do thoſe tears expreſs? if I have diſturbed your tranquillity, my misfortunes will be great indeed. But I will fly immediately from a place in which I find I cannot, conſiſtently with your peace and my own honour, ſtay a moment longer.'

"He then informed me of his intention to proceed directly to London. Oh Roſina! I diſcovered emotions during this interview which I hope cannot be condemned as imprudent:

prudent: ſome proof of reciprocal regard was ſurely due to ſuch unfeigned affection.

" When we parted, ' remember me,' ſaid he, ' in the light a friend. As a friend, I hope you will never forget me. Think of me as one anxiouſly intereſted for your welfare; whoſe chief, whoſe only felicity,' he added with a ſigh, ' muſt depend upon knowing that you are happy. The period may in time arrive when my heart will find peace; but at preſent we muſt part, my dear, my gentle, my generous Lydia; for I can no longer truſt to the dangerous pleaſure of beholding you.'

" Oh Roſina! we have indeed parted, I fear, for ever; but I ſhall never forget the noble-minded Manning. It is my conſtant though fruitleſs wiſh, to follow his advice, and conſider him in the light of a friend; but the lover riſes conſtantly to my view;

and my heart feels a comfort from the indulgence of a melancholy hope amidſt the tempeſt of deſpair.

"I feel a pleaſure in contemplating the virtues which have occaſioned my pain; and I would not exchange the preſent ſorrows of my heart for all the joys which a common affection, uninterrupted in its progreſs, could poſſibly beſtow. This declaration might appear a paradox to thoſe whoſe breaſts have never known the force of love; but you, who have felt its power, will believe it to be true."

"Noble Manning!" cried Roſina, ſighing at the contraſt ſhe was unavoidably obliged to draw. "Your ſituation, Lydia, muſt be happineſs itſelf, when compared with mine. The advantages which your prudence and diſcretion have gained, muſt contribute to exalt you in your own opinion, while

the

the folly and giddineſs of mine degrades me below the poſſibility of comfort. Thine are the triumphs of virtue, the comforts of prudence, the applauſes of parental affection, while I''——She attempted to proceed, but a burſt of ſorrow choaked her utterance.

While Lydia was affording her kindeſt aſſiſtance to alleviate the ſorrows of Roſina's mind, Miſs Margaret entered the room to acquaint them that ſupper was on the table. Roſina endeavoured to excuſe herſelf from going down; but her aunt would take no denial, and it was in vain to oppoſe her.

The Vicar remarked the dejection of his daughter's ſpirits; which he attributed to the intended departure of the regiment the next morning; nor was he quite miſtaken. The youthful heart of Roſina had received its firſt impreſſions of love from Melford; and

thoſe impreſſions are not eaſily eradicated. Notwithſtanding the treatment, therefore, which ſhe had received, his image ſtill haunted her mind, and while ſhe condemned, ſhe adored him.

Roſina retired, at an early hour, to bed; but ſleep had fled, with comfort, from her pillow. She paſſed the long hours in reſtleſs thought, until fatigue and anxiety procured her an interrupted ſlumber. About three o'clock in the morning the ſound of martial muſic ſtruck her ear. She ſtarted from her uneaſy repoſe. "They are going!" ſhe cried; "Oh Lydia, they are going!" Lydia, alarmed from a ſound ſleep, enquired what was the matter. "The regiment, the regiment is marching!" exclaimed Roſina; and flying to the window, ſhe viewed them unobſerved from behind the curtain.

The

The band was playing immediately before the houſe, where Melford had contrived upon ſome pretence, to halt; fondly flattering himſelf that he might poſſibly ſee his Roſina once again at one of the windows. He raiſed his fine eyes to every part of the building; but when he found that his expectations were diſappointed, his features became obſcured and gloomy; his eyes ſunk in profound melancholy; and he ordered the ſoldiers to proceed on their march. Roſina ſtood liſtening to the beat of the drum until it ſounded in her ear like a diſtant echo; and then, burſting into a flood of tears, returned to a bed of ſorrow and deſpair. "Cruel Melford!" ſhe exclaimed, as ſhe placed her head upon the pillow, "how could you ingratiate yourſelf into my boſom with no other view than to torture my heart? But your treachery has taught me wiſdom;

and may hereafter be of ſervice." But when ſhe looked to that *hereafter* without the ſociety of Melford, without even the proſpect of ever ſeeing him again, it only aggravated her diſcontent.

The family were ſummoned to breakfaſt at the uſual time the next morning. The regiment was gone, and the Vicar was in excellent ſpirits. "I can now, methinks," ſaid he, "look around me with ſecurity; but while thoſe doughty heroes infeſted the place, I was in hourly expectation of having my little caſtle ſtormed, and my treaſures carried away." He obſerved the ſwoln eyes of Roſina; a circumſtance of which he thought it improper to take notice; but he endeavoured to rally both his daughters into good ſpirits; for the breaſt of Lydia, beſides her own ſorrows, ever felt a portion of Roſina's diſtreſs.

The

The Vicar, to divert their minds, promiſed to walk with them in the evening to a delightful ſpot in the neighbourhood, which he had by accident found out; and to introduce them to a ſtranger who, he ſaid, expected their company to tea.

There was a myſterious novelty in this propoſal which excited their curioſity, and to which they inſtantly acceded. Miſs Margaret was as impatient as her nieces to learn who this ſtranger could poſſibly be. After dinner, therefore, they equipped themſelves for walking; and having proceeded about two miles, they ſtruck into a narrow road, where they never before had been. At the extremity of this road they croſſed the corner of a wild and unfrequented heath, and, arriving at the entrance of a wood, the Vicar opened a ſmall gate, which he informed them led to the ſtranger's habitation.

CHAP. XIII.

THE STORY OF MELINDA.

IN a ſmall glen ſtood a cottage, the fit abode of ſolitude, melancholy, and contemplation. Straggling rows of poplars caſt a deep ſhade on the caſement; around which the hand of time had planted little ſprouts of ivy. A channel, muddy, winding, and contracted, flowed through the bottom, undiſturbed by a murmur, unruffled by a curl. Willows, properly called weeping, interſperſed

ſperſed with a few flowers the ſpontaneous growth of nature, covered its banks, and gave an aſpect of gloomy wildneſs to all around.

Mr. Ouſeley's companions were ſtruck with awe and admiration at the ſilent ſolemnity of the ſcene. They contemplated every part with deep attention; no human object was to be ſeen; all was ſtill, calm, motionleſs; and their hearts felt congenial ſorrow from the impreſſive gloomineſs they ſurveyed. The Vicar, at length, unlatched the cottage door, and conducted them into a room where ſat the melancholy miſtreſs of this lonely ſhade. On beholding her, a ſudden emotion thrilled through the nerves of her trembling viſitors. The pathetic words of Lady Randolph were truly deſcriptive of her appearance:—

"In

"In me thou doſt behold
"The poor remains of beauty, once admired;
"The autumn of my days is come already;
"For ſorrow made my ſummer haſte away."

DOUGLAS.

She was indeed in the autumn of her days; but the golden harveſt of ſerenity and joy which ſhould have attended it, ſeemed to be fatally blighted by affliction. The baleful effects of calamity were eaſily to be traced on every fine and expreſſive feature of her face. Her perſon, by nature elegant and graceful, was worn down with the ravages of ſorrow. A belt of ſtraw, curiouſly interwoven, confined a white garment round her waiſt; a hat, formed of the ſame materials, was tied on her head, in a ruſtic manner, with a green ribbon; part of her hair, which was of a dark colour, was faſtened in a braid with a ſmall comb; the

other part hung negligent and diſordered, in great length, upon her ſhoulders; but ſo commanding is real lovelineſs, that even in this attire ſhe impreſſed the minds of her viſitors with reſpect and admiration.

"According to my promiſe," ſaid the Vicar, "I have brought my young pupils to viſit you; they are good and harmleſs; let me requeſt for them your friendly admonitions."

"The office of a monitor," replied the lady, "I accept with pleaſure. To warn others, by my example, to avoid the dangerous precipice from which I have fatally fallen, is perhaps the only ſocial duty that is now left me to perform; and the proſpect of doing good will more than compenſate for the pain I may feel in relating the ſorrows of my heart."

A little

A little roſy girl, the picture of health, and the emblem of innocence, brought in an humble equipage of tea, with ſome country biſcuits, and ſmall pats of butter. A converſation upon indifferent ſubjects enſued; which introduced the ladies to greater eaſe and familiarity with each other. When the ſimple repaſt was finiſhed, Mr. Ouſeley and his family drew their chairs round that of their melancholy entertainer; who, like the good Genii inſtructing unſuſpecting youth, began as follows:—

"The tale of real woe does not require the aid of ornament to affect the heart. Truth is great and powerful: I ſhall not, therefore, attempt to uſe the fictitious imagery of the noveliſt, in relating to you the painful ſtory of my life.

"My

"My name is Melinda Clifford: my father was an Enſign: in his ſecond engagement he received a wound which totally diſabled him; and he was obliged to retire from the ſervice with no means of ſupport but his half-pay, and with no treaſure but his honour and myſelf. My mother died ſoon after I was born; and all the warmth of affection which he entertained for her, he transferred to me. To ſay that he loved me with parental tenderneſs, would not be doing juſtice to the force of his affection. His life, his ſoul, were wrapped up in mine; and if one human being ever idolized another, that being was my father. We choſe as the place of our abode, a cottage in a ſequeſtered part of Carnarvonſhire, whoſe humble roof was ſuited to the abject ſtate of our finances: here we were literally

"Almoſt

"Almoſt on Nature's common bounty fed;
"Like the gay birds that ſung us to repoſe,
"Content and careleſs of to-morrow's fare."

THOMSON.

"Until I attained the age of eighteen all was ſerenity and humble peace. A native cheerfulneſs of diſpoſition prevented the dread of worldly want from preying long upon my mind; and the careſſes of my fond father baniſhed the recollection of thoſe little cares which would now and then obtrude themſelves upon my repoſe. The anxieties of his mind upon my account, when he recollected the precarious nature of his ſituation, were, I am convinced, great and piercing; but his tenderneſs induced him to conceal from me the troubles of his heart. The ſorrowful reflection, that upon his death he muſt leave his darling child to the mercy of a harſh world, without

out fortune and without a friend, prompted the hope, that the perfections which he flattered himself I poſſeſſed, would afford him the opportunity of ſeeing me ſoon advantageouſly ſettled in the world; and he reſolved to concur with the firſt honourable offer that I ſhould receive.

"At this period the ſon of a neighbouring farmer honoured me with his addreſſes; but my fooliſh heart rejected his advances; and I could never prevail upon myſelf to let him apply to his parents for their conſent. My father, ever anxious to cultivate the talents with which nature had endowed me, had created in my mind an ardent fondneſs for the elegant occupation of reading. Books were my great delight, and my ſoul caught from them an idea of refinement incompatible with the lowlineſs of my ſtation. My ſoul was alive to all the ſenſibilities of tenderneſs;

tenderneſs; my mind dwelt with rapture on the purities of love; I was the complete pupil of romance. From reciprocal delicacy of ſentiment my heart expected to derive its higheſt pleaſures; but my lover appeared to be devoid of all taſte; and I could ſcarcely ſupport myſelf under the idea of becoming the wife of ſuch a being. I ſighed at the cruel deſtiny which would doom me to a perſon whom I conſidered as barely human; but my father preſſed me to encourage his hopes; and to gratify the wiſhes of my father, I reſolved to conquer my reluctance, and promote his eaſe, by the ſacrifice of my own.

"While I was endeavouring to ſubdue the aſpiring notions which I had imbibed, and to reduce my ſentiments to a level with my ſituation, an accident happened which proved fatal to our repoſe.

"Our

"Our humble habitation adjoined a haggard belonging to a neighbouring farmer. The hay in it took fire; the rapidity of the flames baffled the timid and awkward exertions of the peaſants to extinguiſh them, and communicating deſtruction to our only home, conſumed in a moment every thing we poſſeſſed. The ſudden loſs of all our property plunged us at once into the depths of miſery; but the dreadful condition to which it reduced my poor father, ſuperſeded every other conſideration in my mind than that which was immediately neceſſary to the ſafety of his life. It affected his ſenſes, and he was borne the helpleſs victim of calamity to an adjacent hut; where, after ſome perſuaſion, the wretched owner permitted us to ſtay.

"My lover was unfortunately abſent from the country; and, as his addreſſes to me were

were unknown to his family, we could derive no aſſiſtance from that quarter; and we not knew whither to turn for ſupport.

" One morning, while I was weeping with diſtraction over that being whoſe exiſtence I held far dearer than my own, and whoſe emaciated and languiſhing body ſeemed to implore the aſſiſtance which I had not the power to procure him, an unknown perſon came to our wretched habitation, and delivered me a purſe containing twenty guineas, ſaying, as he departed, that it came from a gentleman who had heard of, and pitied our misfortunes. Frantic with joy, as I had before been with grief, I devoutly thanked the Providence who had ſo unexpectedly ſent us this relief. My grateful heart poured out unnumbered bleſſings on the head of our generous and unknown benefactor; and I buſied myſelf, with

with rapture, in providing nouriſhment for my almoſt exhauſted and expiring parent.

"The meſſenger who had delivered me the purſe came regularly every morning with enquiries after our health, loaded with ſuch delicacies as were particularly calculated to reſtore the health of an invalid. We preſſed him continually to make us acquainted with the name and ſituation of our worthy and munificent benefactor; and, after repeated entreaty, he, at length, informed us that his maſter only waited for our permiſſion to pay us a viſit. The delicacy of ſentiment which this heſitation implied, was congenial to the ruling paſſion of my ſoul; and expreſſing the gratitude of our hearts, we mentioned the next morning to receive our benefactor.——

"He came.——

"Oh,

"Oh, had he never come! Had he continued to perform the offices of benevolence concealed and unknown, I ſhould have conſidered him as the pureſt miniſter of humanity, and, as ſuch, have adored him: youth, beauty, elegance, inſinuation, every natural, every acquired, every beguiling grace adorned him. Already taught to conſider him as the preſerver of our exiſtence, awe, reſpect, love, and admiration thrilled tumultuouſly through my veins at his approach, and my heart fell a victim to its gratitude.

"I was a ſtranger to guile, and ignorant of the duplicity of the world; but nature bade every feeling of my ſoul to glow with the warmeſt tranſport towards a man who had ſo generouſly raiſed us from the abyſs of miſery and deſpair. The poor and lowly hut in which we lodged was, he ſaid, ill ſuited to the merit of its inmates; and he eaſily perſuaded

ſuaded us to remove to a houſe neat, commodious, and delightfully ſituated to pleaſe a romantic mind, which he provided for our reception.

"My humble lover ſtill peſtered me with his addreſſes; but I turned from them with diſguſt. My creative mind had opened proſpects to my view, which gratified the ambition of my ſoul. Even my poor deluded parent no longer pleaded in his favour. He, like myſelf, fondly imagined that our liberal benefactor looked with tranſports of the pureſt love on Melinda, and thought of exalting her to his own ſphere. My paſſion increaſed; but it was not birth, it was not fortune which added fuel to the flame; it was a paſſion kindled by a contemplation of the angelic virtues which I imagined he poſſeſſed; and with him ſickneſs, ſorrow, ſolitude, would have been, to my mind, health,

health, happineſs, and ſociety. Love, once admitted, ſteals ſilently and unperceived through all the devious labyrinths of the heart. He obſerved the aſcendancy which his aſſumed virtues gained over my warm, thankful, unſuſpecting breaſt, and he ſeized a favourable opportunity to reveal his deſigns. A tender, artleſs, inexperienced girl, I ſaw not the errors into which my miſguided mind was leading me——but I will not attempt to palliate my tranſgreſſion. When the man on whom my heart had long reſted in perfect confidence of happineſs wept over me with agonizing tenderneſs, Virtue, at a fatal moment, forſook her charge, and I conſented to forſake my parent.

" Oh, miſerable veteran in calamity! how often has the pinching hand of poverty afflicted thee! how often haſt thou looked

up

up exultingly, and ſmiled with kindneſs on thy child!

"Villain! ſpecious villain! beneath the cloak of compaſſion to meditate a blow ſo dire, ſo abhorred, ſo inhuman! to tear from the boſom of the aged parent his laſt, his only ſupport, and cruſh at once two miſerable victims!

"My ſeducer conveyed me from the bowers of ſecurity and content to the regions of diſſipation and extravagance; but the noiſy tumults of giddy pleaſure had no power over the more tumultuous reproaches of my inward monitor. Pleaſure appeared to my mind ſtretched on the rack. Gay ſmiling innocence, the ſoothing cherub which gilded ſterile penury, and made content a conſtant gueſt at the ſtinted board, was irretrievably gone. The moſt ſplendid profuſion could furniſh no charms to pleaſe

me: prodigality could purchaſe no ornament to delight my mind or eaſe my heart. I paſſed two years in a ſtate of miſery which the ſlaves who dig in the entrails of Golconda, thoſe wretched tools of avarice and ambition, would have pitied. The being at whoſe abſence my mind was uſed to pine and ſicken, at whoſe preſence my heart was uſed to beat with renovated pleaſure, became odious to my recollection. The idea of an injured father haunted me perpetually; and, in a moment of madneſs and deſpair, I tore from my hated form the gaudy trappings of vice, and precipitately fled from my betrayer's houſe.

"The hope of being received into my father's arms again, of cloſing my eyes upon his fond boſom, of mingling his bleſſings with my expiring ſighs, cheered my deſponding heart, and directed my trembling

ſteps

ſteps towards his habitation. It was then near the concluſion of the autumn, and the darkneſs of the evening had cloſed in as my wearied feet reached the place of his abode. Chill horror thrilled through all my veins as I ſurveyed the houſe. The windows were all barred; nettles covered the threſhold of the door, and the dreary look of deſolation which ſurrounded it, proclaimed that its inhabitant was gone. Every circumſtance of former happineſs, which I had enjoyed under its roof, ruſhed cruelly to my mind: I wrung my hands, I tore my diſhevelled hair, I acted like what I was—a lunatic.

'Oh!' I exclaimed, as I lay upon the earth, 'that I was deep, deep interred! that the ſod which covers the moſt injured of men preſſed on my cold breaſt, a wretch! a wanderer! a fugitive! oh ſacred ſpirit of

my much-injured parent, look down, look down upon the creature who was once thy favourite child! cancel her miſdeeds with an angel's forgiveneſs, and pray that death may ſoon releaſe her from her troubles!

"While I was thus bewailing the ſad conſequences of my fatal miſconduct, a violent ſtorm of rain, accompanied by univerſal darkneſs, overſpread the hemiſphere, and filled me with horror. I wandered for ſome time not knowing where I went. At length, I diſcovered a glimmering light beaming from a diſtant hovel; I crept towards it as well as I was able, and tapped at the door. An old woman, the only object viſible, opened it, and afforded me a ſhelter from the inclement night. So woe-worn a figure as my form preſented to her ſight, ſhe had never before beheld. The tears of pity trickled down the furrows of her

her aged cheek; and perceiving my diſtreſs and fatigue, ſhe kindly invited me to ſhare her pallet of ſtraw. She brought me ſome homely food; but nature, worn out by grief and faſting, loathed all nutriment; and ſhe could only prevail with me to moiſten my parched lips with a little milk, warmed over the expiring embers of a fire. I laid my aching head upon the ſtraw, in hopes of reſt. The fatigue I had undergone kindly cloſed my eyes; but torturing fancy continued to diſturb my mind with images of horror. I awoke ſeveral times ſcarcely able to breathe, with a dew, cold as the icicles of death, upon my forehead.

"While I lay diſordered and reſtleſs, a groan penetrated my ear; another followed which pierced me to the ſoul. I ſtarted in an agony; and waking the old woman, who lay ſnoring by my ſide, enquired from whence

the ſounds proceeded. She informed me that a poor old man, who had for ſome ſhort time lodged in an inner room of her hut, was extremely ill, and expected to die. I aſked her if he had any one with him to alleviate the deep pain he ſeemed to feel. She was about to anſwer; when the ſound of a voice, which will ever remain unobliterated upon my memory, ſtruck my ſenſe, and thrilled through every vein of my body. I ruſhed into the room, which was only a poor ſhed, ſeparated from that in which I lay by a rude partition, and on a heap of ſtraw I diſcovered the dying father of Melinda! a half extinguiſhed candle caſt a dreary gleam of light acroſs the room. The winds whiſtled through the crevices of the hovel. His reſtleſs head ſeemed as if it was endeavouring to conceal itſelf from the cold and chilling blaſt. He was calling for drink.

'All-

'All-gracious Power!' I cried, 'is this my parent? Oh, what,' I ſighed, wringing my hands, 'are all the ſorrows I have felt to this? this is real woe; it leads to madneſs:—Oh! Oh!—Oh! my parent! friend! darling! ſolace of my heart!'—I preſſed his livid lips, cold with the icy hand of haſtening death.—He knew me—but what paſſed I was for ſome time deprived of knowing.

"When I recovered from my ſwoon, I found the old woman ſupporting me in her lap. My father, who had vainly attempted to riſe, was regarding me with unutterable agonies. The ſcene that followed is too dreadful to relate; language could not paint it; and indeed my ſenſes were ſo diſordered, that I myſelf remain happily ignorant of almoſt all that paſſed. Amidſt the pangs of diſſolution he careſſed, bleſſed, and pardoned me. He faintly cried, 'Oh, vice!

how horrid are thy depredations! hapleſs Melinda, its fated victim! my child, thy form beſpeaks thy penitence. The roſes of thy youth are faded; the ſmile of gaiety is flown; the luſtre of thine eyes is extinguiſhed by deſpair. May thy contrition render thee fit for that heaven which can now be thy only reſource for comfort! if you ſhould ſurvive your ſorrows, may you with humility warn others by your example! But oh! when you mention your ſufferings, mention alſo the folly of your parent. Bid other fathers beware of the ruin he has occaſioned to his child, and teach them not to place their children within the reach of danger, by idle expectations of advancement and ambition.'

"On my boſom his forgiving, pure, and fond ſpirit fled from ſorrow, want, and diſeaſe, to the manſions of the dead."

Melinda

Melinda endeavoured to proceed in the ſequel of her ſtory, but a burſt of tears ſtopped her utterance. She roſe ſuddenly from her chair to indulge the ſenſibility of her heart. For ſome time ſhe was unable to proceed; but ſhe, at length, conquered her ſorrow, and continued in broken accents.

"My betrayer had received immediate intelligence of my flight. Stung by remorſe at the treachery he had committed, he purſued me; and, at this awful moment, diſcovering my retreat, dared to break in once more upon the privilege of wretchedneſs. When he beheld me, my haggard looks betrayed evident marks of approaching mortality. Guilt ſhook his ſoul to its inmoſt receſſes, and all the wrongs of injured innocence roſe dreadful to his view. He ſighed, he fell proſtrate at my feet; he groaned forth his ſorrow; and offered to

repair the violence he had committed by making me his wife.

'Villain!' I cried indignantly, 'doſt thou imagine that either thy hand or thy fortune can make reparation for the injuries I have received? can thy grief, thy penitence, reanimate the dead? can the pollution of infamy be waſhed away by remorſe? when I conſidered you a man of virtue, I loved, I adored you. The wide world has not a woe in it that I would not have patiently borne for your ſake; but my ſoul now turns from you with abhorrence. You are the betrayer of my happineſs and your own honour. Look, look on that pale corpſe, the victim of our crimes! Oh, think how you have converted his bleſſing into a curſe, and rendered his daughter his executioner!'

"He obſerved every nerve of my feeble frame ſtrained with agony; he ſaw my eyes fix

fix within their burning ſockets; he ſaw the ſigns of riſing frenzy in my countenance; and he knew—oh terrible!—he knew himſelf to be my deſtroyer. The tribunal at which he muſt one day anſwer for his crimes ruſhed to his imagination, and he fell in agony to the ground.

"Did his ſighs gratify my ears? no; I was not ſanguinary or vindictive; but I acknowledge that I felt a luxury while I bent in ſympathizing pity over the man who had ſtolen my virgin affections.

"My undoer was now proſtrate, a penitent and humble wretch, at my feet. My mind was unequal to the ſeverity of my contending paſſions. My ſenſes failed; and I continued for two years inſenſible to my woe.

"My lover, as I have ſince been informed, ordered the remains of my poor

father to be carried to the grave in decent funeral. He attended the obſequies himſelf, and raiſed a monument of his own repentance by the tributary tears which he ſhed upon the grave. The old woman, whoſe hoſpitable hut had given a temporary ſhelter to our miſeries, was taken by his grateful munificence from her ſtate of indigence, and placed among the cottagers of his own eſtate. Tortured by a retroſpection of his paſt conduct, and anxious to make every atonement in his power for the miſeries he had entailed upon me, I was carefully removed to an apartment in his own houſe, where every endeavour was exerted to adminiſter comfort to a mind diſeaſed. I was guarded with the tendereſt care, ſoothed by unremitted kindneſs, and all my wanderings indulged.

"But even the obliterating effect of madneſs could not eraſe from my mind the direful remembrance that he was the contriver of all my miſeries; and upon the return of my reaſon, I peremptorily inſiſted on departing from his houſe. He endeavoured to convert my reſolution by every argument ingenuity could ſuggeſt; he entreated me to ſtay, with all the warmth of unaffected love, and with all the humility of ſincere repentance; but I was inexorable to his prayers. The exertions of my induſtry I conceived would procure me ſupport; and my ſoul roſe indignant at the idea of receiving accommodation or relief from the man who had abuſed the ſacred names of friendſhip and benevolence, for the purpoſe of corrupting my virtue. The ſpirit of my dear and injured father roſe before my view, and inſpired my mind with an invincible antipathy

to my betrayer. I vowed with all the pertinacity of an unalterable reſolution, never to ſee him more; and, as he dreaded that a return of madneſs might be the conſequence of reiterated oppoſition, he, at length, relinquiſhed his fruitleſs endeavours to detain me; and I abandoned his habitation, friendleſs and forlorn. The ſcene of his paſt happineſs became odious to himſelf; and I have been ſince informed that he alſo ſoon after quitted his houſe, and now lives abroad, a wretched exile from his native country and his friends, a prey to conſuming ſorrow and remorſe. A lady who had heard my tale took me under her roof, cheriſhed, and protected me; and at her death, which happened ſoon afterwards, made ample proviſion for my future comfort. While my ſoul was languiſhing for ſolitude, I diſcovered this retreat, where I have now lived ten

years,

years, and where I hope to breathe my laſt. Your father in an accidental walk overheard me venting my complaints. He introduced himſelf to my notice; and by his frequent viſits, and conſolatory precepts, has, in ſome degree, calmed the perturbation of my mind. At my requeſt he ſolemnly promiſed not to diſcover the place of my retreat, nor even to mention my exiſtence, till time and the influence of thoſe religious devotions which he has inculcated, had ſoftened the keenneſs of my ſorrows. He lately expreſſed a deſire that you ſhould hear my ſtory: I wiſhed to oblige him; and, remembering the dying words of my beloved parent, to teach others wiſdom by my folly, I no longer refuſed to comply with his requeſt.

" May my tale make the impreſſion that I wiſh! May innocence learn from it to beware

beware of the beguiling tongue of flattery! May it alſo learn that even gratitude, the ſweeteſt emotion of the heart, may, by opening the avenues of tenderneſs, while it lulls the vigilance of ſuſpicion, lead to conſequences fatal to our repoſe!—Oh, ye daughters of purity, liſten to the ſad moniteſs of ſorrow! Fly! fly! from the deluſive tale of the flagitious, and be aſſured that when prudence ſuffers any inroad, virtue verges to a decline."

So ſpoke Melinda Clifford; and her voice breathed the ſentiments of her amanuenſis; who hopes, when thoſe eyes which now wander over their own pages are cloſed in death, when the fibres of that hand which now writes them are unſtrung, this humble tale

tale will gain, if not approbation, at leaſt the paſſing tribute of a ſigh for the memory of one who was, if not an uſeful, a harmleſs member of ſociety.

CHAP. XIV.

THE EFFECT OF EXAMPLE.

THE hearts of Lydia and Roſina were too ſuſceptible of tenderneſs not to deeply ſympathize in the melancholy narrative of Melinda's life. Miſs Margaret, who was particularly

particularly fond of all that was romantic and pathetic, ſhed many tears; and loudly inveighed againſt the perfidy of man.

Roſina, ſighing, reflected, with ſadneſs, on the ſimilitude ſhe was compelled to draw between Melford and Melinda's betrayer. When her paſt conduct, her levity, her wildneſs preſented themſelves to her view, ſhe was ſhocked and aſhamed; conſcious that ſhe was obliged to Providence alone for the preſervation of that honour, which ſhe had, by an egregious love of admiration, ſo imprudently laid ſnares to betray.

Lydia, while ſhe commiſerated the misfortunes ſhe had heard related, felt her boſom warm with a triumphant glow, at the remembrance of her Manning's virtues.

The reaſon why the Vicar was ſo anxious for them to hear the particulars of Melinda's ſtory was now obvious to their minds; and this

this diſcovery, perhaps, in ſome meaſure leſſened its effect.

"In this ſolitude," ſaid Miſs Clifford, "I enjoy a calm which I once imagined I ſhould never again experience. Religion, retirement, and the arguments of my worthy friend your father, have given unexpected tranquillity to my mind. Books, work, and contemplation principally engroſs my time. I cultivate no acquaintance but with the neighbouring peaſants, whoſe little wants, as far as it is in my power, I endeavour to relieve. My chief companion is the young girl whom you ſaw wait at tea. She is grand-daughter to the poor woman who kindly ſheltered my unhappy parent. Juſtice and gratitude, as well as humanity, called upon me to protect the friendleſs innocence of an orphan from the dangerous inclemency of an unfeeling world. I now and then

recreate

recreate my ſpirits by liſtening with admiration to the artleſs tale of bluſhing ſimplicity. A life ſpent like mine, may appear horrid and gloomy to thoſe who have never felt adverſity. But ah, my young friends! ſuch a ſituation as I am now in, is to me like the verdure of green ſhades, and the refreſhing coolneſs of ſtreams to the traveller, ſcorched by the peſtilential heat of burning ſands."

Melinda invited her viſitors to walk round her little retreat, and they accepted the invitation with pleaſure. On their firſt entrance, they had conſidered it as the gloomy receſs of horror and deſpair; but they now viewed it as the bower of hope, and the retreat of content; and fancy gave to every object a new appearance.

There was a beauty in its parts which had eſcaped their obſervation. The dark labyrinths of the wood were changed to

pleaſing

pleaſing groves. The drooping boughs of the willow, inſtead of being emblems of ſorrow, were ſtriving with eagerneſs to kiſs the ſtream. The muddy channel was converted into a purling rill. Flowers of beauty and of fragrance ſprang beneath their feet, and woodbines flaunted, with gay luxuriance, upon every tree. Unconſcious that the change was owing to the different temper of their minds, they were aſtoniſhed at the different complexion which every object aſſumed. Roſina thought it the ſeat of happineſs. The love-ſick ſoul of Lydia languiſhed for its privacy; and Miſs Margaret ſaid, it was finely adapted for the enjoyment of philoſophic ſpeculation.

The mild radiance of the moon began to gild the tops of ſome lofty pines which adorned the ſummit of an adjacent hill; the blue expanſe of the ſky was all beſpangled

with

with the brighteſt ſtars. Melinda, caſting her eyes to heaven, "Thoſe glittering harbingers of night," ſaid ſhe, "often employ my mind; I envy thoſe who underſtand aſtronomy; it is a ſtudy which muſt ennoble, purify, and ſublime our ideas. How delightful muſt it be to contemplate, with a perfect knowledge of their nature, the wonderful works of the Great Creator! Increaſing admiration, gratitude, and praiſe muſt follow, when we know the various purpoſes for which theſe bright appearances are ordained;—

"Even thy loweſt works, yet theſe declare
"Thy goodneſs beyond thought, and pow'r divine.
"Speak, ye who beſt can tell, ye ſons of light,
"Angels; for ye behold him, and with ſongs,
"And choral ſymphonies, day without night,
"Circle his throne rejoicing. Ye in heaven,
"On earth, join all ye creatures to extol
"Him firſt, Him laſt, Him midſt, and without end."

MILTON.

She

She recited this beautiful paſſage with a voice ſo clear, ſo ſweet, ſo affecting, with a look of piety ſo finely adapted to its ſenſe, as plainly evinced that conſolations of religion had inſpired her mind with perfect reſignation, and prepared her to meet, without diſmay, the great and awful mandate of Almighty power.

The Vicar reminded his companions of the lateneſs of the hour, and the length of the walk which they had to take. Melinda obtained a promiſe from the ladies to renew their viſits; and they parted from each other with great reluctance, and mutual careſſes.

The ſtory of Melinda's misfortunes, and the amiable character ſhe appeared to poſſeſs, naturally became the ſubject of their converſation as they walked home.

"You

"You hear, my beloved children," ſaid the Vicar, "the fatal conſequences which reſult from inconſiderate credulity. The imprudencies to which it leads make ruin inevitable, and, I had almoſt ſaid, deſerved. You ſee the dangerous folly of encouraging ambitious hopes, and looking to connections beyond the ſphere in which we move. Had the miſguided Clifford given his daughter to the worthy farmer; had he not liſtened to the flattering hope of raiſing her to ſuperior rank, they might ſtill have been happy."

"And yet, papa," ſaid Roſina, "we frequently hear of handſome girls being married to great fortunes, and ſometimes to titles, on account of their beauty."

"True, my child," replied the Vicar, "inſtances of this kind may happen, but not ſo frequently as fame reports; and to raiſe the

the expectations of hope beyond a rational probability of gratification, always opens a ſource of diſappointment, vexation, and danger."

"Nonſenſe, brother!" cried Miſs Margaret; "you ſtrive to extinguiſh all ambition from the girls' breaſts. I ſay they ſhould always look above their own ſphere. They ſhould always encourage an expectation of the moſt ſplendid alliances. Don't tell me of dangers and diſappointments, and vexations; there is much more danger to be apprehended from a mean and grovelling mind, than from a high ſpirit, and aſpiring notions. If I were a Queen, I would not be content. I would ſtill endeavour to ſoar above my ſphere."

The Vicar was not very well pleaſed with his ſiſter's ſentiments upon this ſubject; but knowing that the more he oppoſed them,

the more her violence would increaſe, he endeavoured to ſtop the further propagation of her ſchiſms, by changing the ſubject of converſation.

On their arrival at the Vicarage they found the cloth ready ſpread for ſupper, to which they immediately ſat down. The Vicar reſumed his natural good ſpirits, and in a vein of raillery, which Miſs Margaret could not controvert, entirely overturned her airy ſyſtem of promoting the ends of happineſs by endangering the intereſts of virtue. It was a ſubject in which the future conduct of his daughters was deeply concerned; and as he had, by a few ſucceſsful obſervations, entirely ſilenced his ſiſter's oppoſition, he continued to inculcate the advantages of prudence and humility, till the ſound of a carriage ſtopping at the door put an end to his converſation. Roſina

turned

turned pale; the idea of Melford returning in the character of a penitent lover was uppermoſt in her thoughts. What Lydia felt we cannot aſcertain; ſhe roſe, reſeated herſelf upon a chair, and trembled exceedingly. The Vicar went out to ſee who it was that could come to him at ſo extraordinary an hour; and curioſity induced the girls to follow him.

CHAP. XV.

A DUEL.

THE moment the door was opened, a gentleman alighted from the carriage; and aſſiſted by a ſervant, bore into the hall the body of a man apparently breathleſs, whoſe clothes were ſtained with the vital ſtream of life.

The Vicar, like the good Samaritan, concluded that it was ſome unfortunate traveller, who, as he journeyed on his way had

had ſallen among thieves, and been barbarouſly uſed. He approached to bind up his wounds; to afford him every humane aſſiſtance; and to offer him an aſylum in his manſion of peace. With a heart expanding to benevolence the good man was proffering his ſervices. But at that inſtant, almoſt every ſenſe fled! for beneath the aſpect of immediate death, he diſcovered the features of his ſon, his darling ſon Francis! A groan of the deepeſt ſorrow broke from his heart. "Oh my child! my child!" he exclaimed, "who has done this? my boy, fond darling of my hopes! Oh my ſon! my ſon! Oh, that I could die for thee my lovely Francis!" The girls, almoſt inſenſible of their exiſtence, hung round their parent, with inarticulate ſorrow.

When the firſt burſt of grief was over, the conſternation and horror which the ſad

ſcene had occaſioned, gave way to anxiety for the poor ſufferer. He was conveyed to bed; and the apothecary, whom Suſan had inſtinctively fetched from the village on hearing that it was the body of her young maſter, amidſt this diſtracted and doting family, dreſſed a wound, the pain of which, joined to the fatigue of travelling, had rendered Francis totally ſenſeleſs. The apothecary gave no hopes of his recovery; and intimating the approach of a violent fever, deſired that he might be kept undiſturbed and quiet.

The ſtranger who had taken care of Francis, was requeſted to walk into the parlour; and the Vicar expreſſing great anxiety to be immediately informed of the cauſe of the diſaſter, he inſtantly complied.

"I am inexpreſſibly ſhocked, Sir," he began, "at this melancholy event; and moſt ſincerely

ſincerely commiſerate the grief with which it unavoidably afflicts you. Should the conſequences of it prove fatal, which Heaven in its kindneſs I hope will avert, it may perhaps be a ſad conſolation for you to be informed that your loſs will be univerſally regretted; for the worth, genius, and ſpirit of your ſon made every one who knew him his friend; but I truſt that his promiſing talents will be continued to a family who cannot but adore him. It is now, Sir, vacation time at the Univerſity, and he intended to ſurpriſe you agreeably by an unexpected viſit. I am alſo a ſtudent of the ſame College with him; and we were equally pleaſed with the proſpect of having the company of each other in croſſing the Tweed. This morning we ſtopped at Earlſwood to breakfaſt, where a regiment had halted the preceding evening."

At the mention of this circumſtance Roſina changed colour.

"I was unfortunately acquainted with ſome of the Officers, and we were invited to breakfaſt with them. I was ſorry to find ſtrong liquors on the tea-table, which they mixed in great abundance with their tea; I ſhall not recount the particulars of the converſation; it would indeed be here improper. A Captain Melford taking a glaſs of brandy, drank it off to the health of Miſs Ouſeley."

Roſina's chair ſhook under her, from the agitation into which the mention of Melford's name upon ſuch an occaſion naturally threw her.

"Your ſon ſtarted at the ſound, and repeated the name. Some explanations enſued, in which he found it was his ſiſter. Offended at her name being introduced in ſuch a manner, he expreſſed himſelf with ſome warmth;

warmth; there were liberties indeed taken with her name which no brother could avoid reſenting. Words grew high, but the Officers interfered, and hoſtilities were for the preſent ſuſpended; but their rage was more violent for being ſmothered. They took an opportunity to retire unobſerved, without cauſing the leaſt ſuſpicion; and while I was engaged in private converſation with my friend, the waiter, pale and terrified, entered the room, and informed us that one of the gentlemen was killed. I ruſhed to the ſpot where he ſaid they had fought; found your ſon lying on the ground; and Captain Melford, wounded, ſtanding by him with evident concern; I procured aſſiſtance, and had him brought to the inn. He ſuffered a ſurgeon to bind up his wound; but he refuſed to be put to bed, and peremptorily inſiſted on coming hither, that he

might, if he expired, have the ſatisfaction of dying in the arms of his family. I thought his reſolution imprudent and dangerous, and I oppoſed it for ſome time; but he remained inflexible; and till the laſt five miles he bore his journey with great fortitude. Captain Melford, with a diſtreſs which greatly abated my reſentment towards him, before we ſet out, bitterly regretted the effect which his raſhneſs had produced. You are going, ſaid he to me, to a family whom I know and eſteem; but whoſe domeſtic felicity I have by this accident unfortunately broken. It was I who gave the provocation; it was I who irritated a brother to defend the character of his ſiſter; I alone am culpable; the affliction into which I am conſcious this ſad event will involve his family, overwhelms me with the keeneſt remorſe; I have ever deteſted this barbarous

practice;

practice;—but it is in vain to apologize for my conduct. You know that I am compelled to accompany my regiment to Swansgrove, where we are to be quartered. At that place I ſhall be found; and ſhould the young gentleman fall a victim to my impetuoſity, I muſt abide the conſequences. Whenever it ſhall be found neceſſary, I ſhall voluntarily reſign myſelf to the laws of my country; and although I am conſcious they cannot find me guilty of premeditated malice, I fear that my own conſcience will upbraid me with wantonneſs and intemperance, and peace will for ever be an alien to my heart."

Roſina, whoſe ſenſes had been gradually fleeting, now fell ſenſeleſs to the ground. She was carried, in convulſive agitations, to her apartment. The friend of Francis, perceiving the diſorder and commotions of

the family, very conſiderately refuſed to accept the offer of a bed, and immediately departed to his family, who reſided in the ſame county, at ſome diſtance from the Vicarage.

The preſent melancholy ſtate of Mr. Ouſeley's family exemplifies the fatal conſequences of imprudence. Roſina, by coquetry, levity, and folly, had raiſed illuſions in the mind of Melford, which her unexpected virtue had ſuddenly diſpelled. Diſappointment had ſoured his temper; divided between love and ambition, half glad, half ſorry, that he had not honourably purſued his deſigns, he was in that irritable frame of mind which takes fire at the ſlighteſt oppoſition, and it now blazed forth, inflamed with fury, on the head of the innocent but impetuous Francis; who, ſolicitous for the honour,

honour, and anxious for the welfare of his ſiſter, could not bear to hear her name made the laugh of riot and intemperance.

CHAP XVI.

PARENTAL TENDERNESS.

BY proper applications Roſina, at length, opened her eyes; and languidly raiſing them, breathed a deep ſigh. "Never," ſhe exclaimed, "ſhall I recover from the ſhock that I have received! Had my folly recoiled only upon my own head, I could have borne it;

it; but to be the deſtroyer of my brother, my Francis, my darling brother! Oh! can my father ever bear me again in his ſight? To rob him of the comfort of his widowed days! Oh, Lydia! is there in human nature a miſery ſo intolerable as mine?"

"My deareſt love," cried her aunt, while ſhe wept over her, "compoſe your ſpirits, your brother may recover; at leaſt, your father cannot be diſpleaſed with you for an accident which you could not poſſibly occaſion."

"Ah no!" ſhe replied, "he will deteſt, abhor, abjure me; I ſhall be odious to my family and hateful to myſelf."—In uttering theſe words ſhe relapſed into the moſt violent convulſions. Her aunt terrified at the ſight of her diſtorted frame, folded her to her breaſt. Lydia flew down ſtairs to ſeek her

father,

father, and to beſeech him to go up and conſole the miſeries of her ſiſter.

Cold horror oppreſſed Roſina when ſhe reflected that by indiſcreetly ſuffering ſuch familiarity to Melford, ſhe had been acceſſary to her brother's fate; and when ſhe recollected that the man whom ſhe paſſionately loved, in ſpite of all that had happened, was in danger of his life, if the wound ſhould prove mortal, from the laws of his country, ſhe gave herſelf up to violence and deſpair.

Lydia overcome by conflicting emotions, ſunk upon a chair as ſhe entered the parlour. Her tongue refuſed to perform the benevolent purpoſes of her heart; and her endeavours to make known the melancholy condition of her ſiſter were loſt in inarticulate ſounds, till tears, like dew-drops which hang upon the drooping bell of the lily,

relieved

relieved her diſtreſs. The Vicar, who had been vainly endeavouring to tranquillize his own mind, preſſed her in his arms, and mingled his tears with her's.

"Alas! my child," ſaid he, "I fear my cloudleſs day is gone for ever. My evening ſun I ſee muſt ſet in dark affliction. I fondly hoped to end a long and grievous pilgrimage, like the good old Patriarch, amidſt my children; but my boy, my darling boy, whoſe genius promiſed ſuch harveſt of felicity, is cut off in the ſummer of his days by the hand of violence. He has, however, acquired ſome reputation; and it is an alleviation of my miſery to reflect, that though death has prematurely plucked my faireſt flower, it has been ſuffered to attain ſome degree of fragrance and perfection."

"Oh, my dear father!" cried Lydia, "thoſe virtues from which you are deriving

conſolation, will ſurely render his loſs more grievous and inſupportable. Ah, my Francis! when I look back upon your boyiſh days, when I retrace your guileleſs ſports, when I think how much your growing fame has promiſed to make you your parent's comfort and your ſiſter's friend, my heart mourns with anguiſh on your danger."

The emotions which Lydia exhibited while ſhe thus poured forth this ſorrowful ejaculation, deſtroyed the fortitude which the Vicar had vainly imagined he had collected. The feelings of the parent, and, if it can with propriety be ſo called, the weakneſs of the man, reſumed the fulneſs of their power.

" 'Tis true, my child," he continued, " his virtues, as you ſay, will render his loſs more intolerable; and if Francis dies, I feel my peace of mind is gone for ever.

Forgive

Forgive me, Heaven! forgive a weak, infirm old man, who has too fondly built an edifice of hope, which, tottering to deſtruction, threatens to involve in its demolition the fabric of his life!—My poor Francis, the darling of my departed angel!—Young as you were, Lydia, you muſt remember the cloſing period of her life, when ſurrounded by her weeping family, calm, mild, and compoſed, ſhe recommended you all to my care. While you ſtood weeping at the foot of the bed, ſhe called you to her. 'My little innocent,' ſaid ſhe, 'be comforted, my Ouſeley will be kind to my lambs:' and then reſigned her ſoul into the hands of her Creator."

"Never," ſaid Lydia, "ſhall I forget the icy preſſure of her lips, or the clay-cold touch of her feeble hand."

"Glorious

"Glorious was her exit," replied the Vicar. "The tomb received her in the maturity of perfection, and her ſoul, ſublimed and pure, ſped on the wings of hope, faith, and immortality, to the manſions of the bleſſed.—But oh, my ſon! muſt I loſe thee in the beginning of thy days? Indeed, my Lydia, I fear he will part from us.—Can I ever bear the ſight of that raſh, imprudent girl, whoſe giddineſs has thus fatally expoſed her name to be the ſport of the licentious; whoſe friends, family, reputation, all were ſacrificed to an inſatiate thirſt for admiration? Oh! no, no; ſhe is unworthy of the name of child."

"Oh, ſay not ſo!" cried Lydia; "my ſiſter, in agonies, beſeeches to ſee you. On my knees I entreat that you will comply with her requeſt. Oh, were you to ſee her, pale and languiſhing, her gentle nature

ſhocked

ſhocked and terrified at the ſad event! you know, Sir, ſhe has not a vicious heart.—How often have you ſaid that humanity ſhould excuſe the venial faults of nature. You are not, Sir, of an inflexible diſpoſition. Come then, Sir, come to your child; ſooth her into comfort, and ſay that you forgive her."

The Vicar melted into tears at the pathetic exhortation of his daughter; and raiſing her to his arms—" You have conquered all my reſentment, Lydia," he cried. Poor Roſina! the beſt may err. Shall I not aid to recover the tranquillity of my child? One is already gone—oh no! Heaven may yet in its mercy reſtore him."

With compaſſionate tenderneſs he aſcended the ſtairs to Roſina's room; who, upon hearing the footſteps of her father, ſunk almoſt fainting on the boſom of her aunt,

aunt, crying, in great affliction, "Oh, he will not, he cannot forgive me!"

"Behold," ſaid Miſs Margaret, as he entered the room, "behold the ſituation of my lovely girl; and if your heart is not harder than a tiger's, you will afford her conſolation."

"The human mind," ſaid Mr. Ouſeley as he advanced, "ſoftened by affliction, forgets its reſentments, and ſeeks, by offices of tenderneſs, to leſſen the wretchedneſs of others, and to alleviate its own. Look up, my Roſina, nor aggravate my diſtreſs by your tears."

Roſina fell proſtrate at his feet. He kindly raiſed her from the ground, and folded her in his arms. "Let us not," ſaid he, "by murmurings and complaints, appear to arraign the ways of Heaven; without whoſe permiſſion the raſh hand of Melford could not

not have ſtruck this blow at the darling of our hopes. Let us rather, like mutual ſufferers on a ſea of affliction, endeavour to ſave each other, and avoid a total wreck. Should the dire calamity we ſo much dread overtake us——" But nature made a pauſe, an awful pauſe; and he was unable to proceed.

The tenderneſs of her father revived the ſinking ſpirits of Roſina. She attended her aunt and her ſiſter to the room where her brother lay; who ſtill remained ſenſeleſs, and unable to ſpeak. The next morning, however, he uttered a few incoherent expreſſions, and at length recovered his faculties ſo far as to recollect his family.

The wound ſtill exhibited appearances extremely alarming; and the apothecary prognoſticated an increaſe of fever from ſymptoms which, he whiſpered Miſs Margaret

garet, had entirely deſtroyed the few hopes he before entertained of his patient's recovery.

The anguiſh which tore the boſom of Roſina when ſhe received this intelligence is beyond deſcription. Conſcience upbraided her mind with the guilt of her conduct, and placed the poſſible effects of it in the moſt horrid point of view. The man whom her heart adored, miſguided in his conceptions of her character from the levity of her behaviour, had given this ſtab to the happineſs of her family. The image of a lover imbruing his hands in the vital blood of a beloved brother, haunted her inceſſantly like a frightful ſpectre. Her own reflections increaſed the pang of every ſorrow, and pierced her feelings with an envenomed dart.

Suſpenſe,

Suſpenſe, the moſt painful paſſion of the ſoul, tortured the minds of this anxious family for ſeveral days; and, as the fever was now faſt approaching to its criſis, attended with ſymptoms of the moſt malignant nature, no hopes remained. Francis, whoſe life promiſed diffuſive felicity to his connections, now appeared haſtening to the cold manſions of the dead, where the wicked can betray no more, the weary are at reſt, and the good find immortal happineſs and calm repoſe.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVII.

THE RETURN OF PEACE.

THE nerves of Francis were ſtrung with youth; and the inveteracy of his diſeaſe ſtrove in vain againſt the ſtrength of nature. We ſhall not, therefore, have occaſion to detain our readers long in the chamber of an invalid. Hygeia, the blooming Goddeſs of Health, again returned to reanimate his veins, to re-illumine his eyes with their

wonted fire, and promiſed, in proper time, to repaint his cheeks with her unrivalled rouge.

The neceſſary confinement to his room was rendered leſs irkſome to him by the anxiety of his ſiſters to divert his mind; they read, ſung, played, and chatted to him whenever his ſpirits were able to bear the pleaſures of ſociety. The entertainment of reading, indeed, was generally undertaken by Miſs Margaret, who prided herſelf extremely upon her ſuperior excellence in this elegant art; and ſhe was highly delighted with the fondneſs which her nephew profeſſed for the Novels which ſhe read to him. The Vicar alſo contributed his ſhare of entertainment, and promiſed his ſon much pleaſure from the reading of a treatiſe, which he had written upon the ſubject of the cardinal virtues. Poor Francis, however, happened

to doze a little in the moſt intereſting part of the work, and the Vicar was not a little diſconcerted by his inattention; but it afforded ſingular triumph to Miſs Margaret, as he had liſtened very attentively to a long hiſtory which ſhe had read to him the preceding evening.

Health is much eaſier deſtroyed than reſtored; and although the ſtrength of our patient's conſtitution had baffled the fever in its moſt furious attack, and placed danger at a conſiderable diſtance, yet his ſtrength returned by very ſlow degrees; he was, however, ſo much recovered as to introduce a converſation upon the occaſion of his illneſs.

The Vicar remonſtrated with great ſeriouſneſs againſt the intemperance of a paſſion which could lead to an action ſo raſh, ſo cruel, ſo derogatory to the firſt principles

of benevolence and humanity—an action which carried the appearance of an attempt to ruſh uncalled and prematurely into the preſence of the Almighty—an action repugnant to the ſacred injunction which commands us "not to let the ſun go down upon our wrath."

Francis, with the candour and generoſity of his nature, acknowledged the error of which he had been guilty, and exculpated Captain Melford from all blame. He confeſſed the propriety of his father's ſentiments upon the ſubject, and liſtened with patience, conviction, and gratitude to his words.

Roſina's mind, now relieved from all apprehenſion of her brother's death, or her lover's danger, thought no more of thoſe long trains of ills which had before tortured her fancy. The ruſſet robes of Griſſet, and Queen Eſther's garment of ſackcloth and aſhes,

aſhes, vaniſhed from her mind; and ſhe received a very ſevere rebuke from Lydia for ſuffering ſome gruel, which ſhe had undertaken to make for her brother, to boil over into the fire, while ſhe was trying on a new cap at the glaſs, to ſee how it would ſuit the preſent delicacy of her complexion. Lydia aſked her, a little peeviſhly, if it was for the pleaſure only of looking in the glaſs that ſhe was dreſſing; but recollecting that young Sedgeley had been invited to ſpend the evening with Francis, another motive immediately ſuggeſted itſelf to her mind, as ſhe knew her ſiſter's deſire to keep all her admirers within her trammels.

In proportion as the health of Francis returned, happineſs was reſtored to the family; the bright beams of peace once more ſhed their enlivening influence upon the Vicar's houſe, and joy and felicity returned

to

to that abode, where, foſtered by innocence, they had ſo long flouriſhed.

" In Nature's faireſt forms, is aught ſo fair
" As virtuous friendſhip? as the candid bluſh
" Of him who ſtrives with fortune to be juſt?
" The graceful tear that ſtreams for others' woes?
" Or the mild majeſty of private life,
" Where peace with ever-blooming olive crowns
" The gate; when Honour's liberal hands effuſe
" Unenvied treaſures, and the ſnowy wings
" Of Innocence and Love protect the ſcene?"

THE PLEASURES OF IMAGINATION.

END OF VOL. I.

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